

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

To 'Snitch' or Not to 'Snitch'?
Using PAR to Explore Bullying in a Private Day and
Boarding School

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A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Anglia Ruskin
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ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND EDUCATION
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

TO 'SNITCH' OR NOT TO 'SNITCH':
USING PAR TO EXPLORE BULLYING IN A PRIVATE DAY AND BOARDING
SCHOOL

Niamh O'Brien
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This study used a Participatory Action Research (PAR) framework to explore bullying in a private day and boarding school. Six students from the school were recruited and trained in research; we worked together to answer this question: **What do young people in this private day and boarding school view as the core issue of bullying in the school and how do they want to address this?**

This thesis presents three cycles of PAR through inquiry, action and reflection: Cycle one, initiated by myself, investigated the bullying definition at the school and how this was understood by the school community. Online questionnaires and a focus group were used to collect data.

Cycle two was initiated by the research team following analysis of cycle one data. The 'core bullying issue' was identified as that of the 'snitch' and how participants conceptualised 'serious' and 'not serious' bullying. Paper questionnaires and student-led interviews were used to collect data.

Cycle three focussed on the tangible 'action' from the project: the development of a draft anti-bullying strategy for the school.

This thesis has two separate contributions. Firstly there is a subject contribution about 'snitching'; students had to navigate a complex web in their decision to 'snitch' or not to 'snitch'. Deciding whether the bullying was 'serious' enough to 'snitch' impacted on their initial decision. Furthermore students needed to decide if 'snitching' was the right thing to do. Secondly there is a methodological contribution; I further developed an existing framework for evaluating the participation of children in research (Dual-axis Model of Participation, Moules and O'Brien, 2012), through adding the dimensions of '*ideas*' and '*knowledge*'.

This study supports the social construction of bullying but also recognises the nuances associated with how bullying is conceptualised by students. The study focusses on an area specifically raised by the students through the process of the research and also highlights the importance of involving young people in research that is of particular

interest to them; it provides them with a sense of ownership over the process and therefore they want to ensure the recommendations are implemented. Accordingly the work of the project continues although the research has ended.

Keywords: Bullying, Private School, Young People, Participation, Participatory Action Research (PAR)

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Acronyms

ABA = Anti-Bullying Alliance
AR = Action Research
DfES = Department for Education and Skills
DfE= Department for Education
DH = Department of Health
DMP = Dual-axis Model of Participation
DV = Domestic Violence
ISI = Independent Schools Inspectorate
LA = Local Authority
NCB = National Children's Bureau
Ofsted = Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
OBPP = Olweus Bullying Prevention Programme
PAR = Participatory Action Research

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Note:

In this thesis I recognise and value the contribution made by the young researchers (R4U) and in essence I view this work as two projects: firstly it is **my** doctorate and secondly it was **our** attempt to interpret bullying within the confines of this school. I experienced great difficulty in the write up of this work as to whether I should use the terms 'I' or 'our' when discussing various aspects of the project. I recognise there are aspects of this work that were *collaborative* and as such belong to the whole team. In this case I use the terms 'our' and 'we'. However as this is *my* doctoral thesis there are other parts of this work that R4U did not contribute to such as the critical discussions in chapters six and ten, and the evaluations in chapters five, eight and eleven. In these cases I use the term 'I' where necessary.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the study

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the rationale for this doctoral study by providing my personal motivations for conducting the study and an overview of the research context. I complete this chapter with a brief overview of each of the twelve chapters in the thesis.

1.2 Personal motivations

I conducted my first piece of funded research from 2004 until 2006 working with a group of secondary school pupils as co-researchers. An issue raised among the group was that of bullying in their school. Parents contacted me to say they were unhappy about the way the school handled bullying complaints and felt that they and their child were not listened to or taken seriously by teachers and other professionals. The pupils felt similarly. It became apparent to me that pupils and teachers differed in their perceptions of bullying and that although a definition existed in the anti-bullying policy, it had not been devised in conjunction with teachers or pupils.

On a personal level I experienced bullying when studying for my degree. At the time I was living with a group of other students, and one person, who was a regular visitor to our house, bullied me through the use of exclusionary methods. At the time this hurt me very much and I felt like I did not fit in with my peers who on occasion sided with him. It was at the end of my first year that I told my parents about what I had been experiencing and they supported me through this. It made me question why I had not told them earlier. When I was made aware of the bullying issues whilst working on the above project, I was able to relate to these pupils and I understood, to some extent, their frustrations and upset with what they had experienced and the response they were receiving from their school. Thus the passion to speak to young people about their perceptions of bullying has remained both a personal and professional interest of mine.

The above laid the foundations for my MSc dissertation, which used Systematic Review (SR) methodology to explore definitions of bullying with teachers and students in secondary schools. Both groups identified aspects of verbal and physical abuse as bullying but differences, specifically related to each aspect of bullying, were found. Teachers were more likely to consider issues of power imbalance and social exclusion than students while students identified issues of sexualised bullying, focus on difference, coercion and cyber-bullying which teachers failed to mention (O'Brien, 2009).

1.3 The research context

School bullying is described in classical literature, for example *Tom Brown's school days*¹ in the 19th century, which resulted in public disputes regarding the damaging effects of bullying in English private schools (Rigby, 2003a). Academic research into school bullying has developed rapidly since the 1970s (Smith, 2004; Cowie and Jennifer, 2008; Cuadrado-Gordillo, 2012) but despite this interest there is still no agreed definition of bullying with debate continuing over where acceptable 'playground behaviour' ends and bullying begins (Cowie and Jennifer, 2008; Rigby, 2008). Consequently, in the UK no robust national statistics exist for reported cases of bullying in schools (OFSTED, 2003; Cowie and Jennifer, 2008). Generating knowledge about the degree of bullying in schools is difficult for two reasons: firstly, young people who do report bullying, will only report incidents they consider are bullying (Mauder et al., 2010) and research shows that discrepancies exist in what young people and adults consider bullying to be (Menisini et al., 2002; Oliver and Candappa, 2003; Naylor et al. 2006); secondly there is a reluctance from adults and students² to identify bullying and label children and young people³ as 'bullies'.

Bullying research in mainstream secondary schools is plentiful in the literature (see for example Oliver and Candappa, 2003; Thompson and Gunter, 2008), but in the context of private day and boarding schools research is limited. The aim of this study is to add to the knowledge regarding bullying, particularly in relation to private day and boarding schools where understanding is limited. It also adds to the debate in relation to involving students in research and how they can become agents of change in their community. The approach used to conduct the work was a Participatory Action Research (PAR) framework embedded in the philosophy of social constructionism.

This doctoral study was situated in a private day and boarding school located in the East of England. Private schools are also known as Independent schools. They are fee-paying schools governed by an elected board of governors and they are usually exempt of the

¹ Tom Brown was a fictional story about a boy attending a boarding school in Rugby and subjected to a series of bullying attacks.

² During this study I use the term 'students' when referring to the young people who participated in the study and also with reference to the young researchers who formed the research team. In the literature the terms 'pupil' and 'student' are used interchangeably so when referring to the literature I will use the terms of the authors.

³ Although children are considered to be any person under the age of 18 years, the Children and Young Persons Act (1933) England – a provision still in force today – states that a 'child' becomes legally defined as a 'young person' at age 14. During this thesis the terms 'children' and 'young people' are used interchangeably.

regulations and conditions applicable to state-schools (Wikipedia, 2015). I have named this case study school *The Olive Tree School*.

The Olive Tree School

The Olive Tree School was first opened in 1799 as a Catholic boarding school for girls. Today the school caters for boys and girls from reception to the sixth form with boarding provision from year three onwards (eight years old).

This study took place in the senior school with students from year seven to year thirteen. Although the school is co-educational, it operates on a diamond model, which means that up until age eleven all students are educated together. From ages eleven to sixteen students are taught in single-sex lessons and in the sixth form they are taught again in co-educational lessons.

During the time that I conducted the research, the student population for the senior school was 805. Of this number, 198 were either full or weekly boarders. The school has provision for a maximum of 90 flexi boarders⁴ and the numbers of flexi-boarders are combined with the day student population (N=607). Using the numbers available, the school has an approximate 25% boarding population.⁵ At the time of the study the senior school had 335 boys and 470 girls on role.

The school had (and still have) a peer mentor group known as '*Blossom*', members of which are trained sixth formers providing support and guidance to younger pupils, including bullying. An integral part of this doctoral research was ascertaining from students their views on accessing this support if they required it.

1.4 Thesis structure

This study was conducted across three cycles of PAR. The two original contributions to knowledge are presented in cycles one and two. The third cycle specifically related to the development of a draft anti-bullying strategy, and was developed as a result of the research process and findings.

The thesis is presented across twelve chapters and is divided into four parts.

⁴ Students who board sporadically

⁵ With provision for a further 11% (flexi boarders)

Contextual literature and methodological framework: consists of three chapters - one to three.

The current chapter has laid the foundations for the research.

In *chapter two* I present a critical review of bullying research literature and recognise a shift from understanding bullying as a result of personality traits of victims, bullies and bystanders (Olweus, 2003) to understanding the social construction of bullying and the process of group dynamics (Schott and Sondergaard, 2014). I identify the difficulties with defining bullying and provide a critical review of the limited bullying literature in private day and boarding schools.

In *chapter three* I present a review of the literature addressing children's social position in society. I address the policy context, which increasingly recognises that children have valid contributions to make. I then examine the literature on children's participation and I end with presenting a recent model for evaluating children's participation in research - The Dual-axis Model of Participation (DMP) (Moules and O'Brien, 2012).

In *chapter four* I present the methodological considerations for the study including the ethics and value base pertinent to this PAR research. I also present the overall aims and objectives of the study and the research questions for cycle one. I argue that a PAR framework rooted in the philosophy of social constructionism is a valid approach for this project because it allows for the active involvement of the students in the research process.

Cycle one: consists of two chapters - five and six.

In *chapter five* I present the PAR process applicable to cycle one. The research team, including recruitment and training is presented. I also discuss the methods we used to collect data and the analytical framework adopted. This chapter also presents how two evaluations of the research process were conducted, one of which was the DMP. Findings from these evaluations enabled me to propose a further dimension to the model through recognising how '*ideas*' are constructed as part of the decision-making process. This chapter also presents reflections on the learning from cycle one.

Chapter six is presented in two parts; firstly I present the findings from cycle one. The research questions for this cycle are used to frame the findings around definition and satisfaction with how bullying is handled at the school. Secondly, the findings are discussed within the context of the literature reviewed in chapters two and three. This chapter ends by introducing the topic of inquiry for cycle two; what is considered 'serious' and 'not serious' bullying at *The Olive Tree School* and the concept of the 'snitch' and how students cope with the dilemma of telling.

Cycle two: consists of four chapters - seven to ten.

Chapter seven explores the literature on 'serious' and 'not serious' bullying and the complexities of reporting bullying situations in schools.

In *chapter eight* I present the research process for cycle two and the ethical considerations. I also discuss the final evaluation of participation and present a proposed fourth dimension to the DMP; '*knowledge*'. This chapter ends with my original methodological contribution to knowledge – that of a double extension to the DMP through adding '*ideas*' and '*knowledge*' to the framework. I also reflect on the learning from cycle two in this chapter.

In *chapter nine* I present the findings from cycle two in two parts in line with the two research questions. These findings highlight the disparities not only between adults and students in terms of how bullying is conceptualised but also between students themselves. In addition the complexities of telling somebody about bullying are presented.

In *chapter ten* I present a critical discussion of the key findings across the two research cycles and I identify the original subject contribution to knowledge. This discussion illuminates the complex web students need to negotiate in their decisions to 'snitch' or not to 'snitch' about bullying behaviours. This chapter also presents and discusses cycle three in relation to the PAR process.

Participation: One chapter –chapter eleven.

Chapter *eleven* provides a critical discussion of the participatory process drawing on the three participation evaluations conducted across the two cycles of research. The discussion is centred on conclusions about the participatory process recognising that decision-making is more than the end result, the adult plays an active role in the process and that young people have an active and valid contribution to make as researchers.

Chapter *twelve* concludes this thesis summarising the core contributions to knowledge, discussing the strengths and limitations of the study and directions for future research.

The next chapter begins with laying the foundations for this study by presenting a critical review of bullying research literature.

Contextual literature and methodological framework

Chapter 2: What is Bullying? Background and Context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by providing a policy context to school bullying and a contextual background to school bullying research. Consideration is then given to the definitional difficulties with the term 'bullying'. Definitions are contentious and this illuminates the numerous perspectives there are on bullying. This chapter ends with a critical review of the limited bullying research in private day and boarding schools before presenting the rationale for the study.

2.2 Policy Context

From November 1999 it became law for all schools, in England and Wales, to have an anti-bullying strategy in place (Smith and Samara, 2003) implemented through the School Standards and Framework Act (1998). This Act covered all local authority (LA) schools in England and Wales (Tarapdar and Kellett, 2011). In 2003 the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations came into force and the same onus was placed on independent schools, these regulations were updated in January 2015 (DfE, 2015). Despite this development, a review of the literature undertaken for ChildLine in 2003, showed little involvement from children about what works in tackling bullying, identifying gaps in research and knowledge about the effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies (Oliver and Candappa, 2003). Thompson and Smith (2012), in publishing a review of anti-bullying initiatives used in schools concluded that a plethora of interventions are being used in schools across the western world. Although many have proved successful further research is needed into specific elements of some interventions to determine success.

Implementation of a schools anti-bullying policy form part of the agenda of the Office for Standards in Education Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) who conduct inspections of Schools in England and Wales approximately every four years (Smith, 2004). OFSTED no longer inspect independent schools, this is conducted by *The Independent Schools Inspectorate* (ISI) who are:

“...approved for the purpose of inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, and report to the Department for Education on the extent to which schools meet statutory requirements.”

The rationale for adopting an anti-bullying policy in schools is three-fold (Glover et al., 2000). Firstly everybody within the school will know what the school is doing and why; secondly it shows that bullying will not be tolerated and finally an anti-bullying policy can

be used to monitor progress (Glover et al., 2000). However, it is easy to write a whole-school philosophy about bullying into vision statements, school policies and charters but it also requires action (Sullivan et al., 2004). In 2004 the National Children's Bureau reported:

“Effective anti-bullying strategies will help pupils to realise their academic potential and will contribute to the creation of a happy, healthy and safe school” (NCB, 2004).

In 2010 The Equality Act came into effect emphasising the elimination of prejudiced-based bullying in order to eradicate discrimination (Tarapdar and Kellett, 2011). This Act replaces previous anti-discrimination laws and all schools, both maintained and independent, are required to comply with the new Equality Duty (DfE, 2012). Specialist organisations providing advice and support to students, parents and teachers have been established on a global scale. In the UK, the Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA) the Kidscape charity and others, have been established (DfE, 2012).⁶ These initiatives reflect a change in the focus on bullying from campaigning to establishing tangible anti-bullying policies and initiatives in schools (PWC, 2007). The effectiveness of these policies and initiatives in schools have had mixed results (Thompson and Smith, 2012).

2.3 Historical overview of bullying research

The systematic study of bullying in schools began in the 1970s in Scandinavia. The first nationwide campaign against bullying took place in Norway and subsequently the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) (Olweus, 2003) was developed and has been used all over the world with varying results (Smith and Morita, 1999).

Although Olweus is credited with establishing academic school bullying research in the 1970s, Horton (2011) argues that the study of this phenomenon began with the work of Peter-Paul Heinemann. Heinemann was a Swedish physician and adoptive father of a black boy experiencing exclusion and harassment at school, and in 1969 Heinemann introduced the term 'mobbing' (Schott and Sondergaard, 2014). This term was borrowed from the work of Konrad Lorenz who studied mob behaviour in animals. Heinemann used this term to describe a situation where a group attack an individual and following contributions from laypersons 'mobbing' came to be understood as 'group violence' (Schott and Sondergaard, 2014). Heinemann proposed that children who bully are not necessarily deviant but are ordinary children participating in bullying within a group context (Horton, 2011). Olweus questioned the coherent nature of the mob and was

⁶ See appendix 1 for more details about some of these specialist organisations.

interested in the individual roles of those in the bullying situation (Horton, 2011). Although Heinemann was interested in understanding how bullying is more likely to happen in a particular situation, Olweus was concerned with the individual characteristics of those involved in a bullying encounter (Horton, 2011). Olweus describes the bully as a dominant aggressor with “little empathy with their victims” (Schott and Sondergaard, 2014:2) and the victims as “passive, submissive, anxious, insecure and weak” (Schott and Sondergaard, 2014:2).

Many other writers share the view of Olweus and bullying research since the 1970s has been dominated by an attempt to understand more about the individual personality traits of the bully and victim as well as the home environment that bully and victim children come from. Schott and Sondergaard (2014:2) refer to this understanding as “*paradigm one*” (italics in original). Studies situated in *paradigm one* generally use quantitative measures to gather data, highlighting an over-reliance on the positivist perspective in furthering our knowledge about this phenomenon. These studies aim to:

“...identify causes, predict occurrences and develop evidence-based intervention programmes. Both researchers and practitioners measure data that can be individualised, and they are often blind to other constituting and enacting forces”. (Schott and Sondergaard, 2014:3).

A new paradigm of bullying research

In their edited book *School Bullying: New theories in context*, Schott and Sondergaard (2014) reemphasise the need for additional knowledge about bullying. They recognise a new era in bullying research that no longer centres entirely on the aggressive intent of the bully and the passive acceptance of the victim. These researchers, and others, propose that researchers need to include the social context of a bullying situation and acknowledge the many roles pertinent in a bullying situation. They refer to this new way of conceptualising bullying as “*paradigm two*” the motivation of which is to:

“...uncover the complex processes by which bullying is enacted as well as its complex effects.” (Schott and Sondergaard, 2014:3)

In a critique of the work of Olweus, Schott (2014) proposes a number of problematic assumptions about the claim that bullying is an expression of individual aggression. Schott (2014) states that this claim suggests that by virtue of their home environment some people are natural bullies and others are natural victims. Olweus (2003) suggests that further research is needed classifying students as bullies or as victims. Indeed Schott (2014) states that Olweus does not allow for the fact that sometimes an individual can be a bully and other times a victim. Olweus (2003) however recognises two types of victims, the passive victim and the provocative victim also referred to as bully/victims.

Schott (2014) suggests that Olweus's theory is problematic and proposes that the positions of the 'bully' and the 'victim' are more fluid than Olweus's theory allows citing interviews with young people who changed their roles in the bullying episode to fit in with a particular group.

Paradigm two focusses on the constant changing positions within a bullying encounter, and argues that children can sometimes be the bully, sometimes be the victim and sometimes the bystander/witness (Schott and Sondergaard, 2014). In contrast, thinkers from *paradigm one* accept that a child who is a bully will be a bully for some time, even years and the child who is a victim will be a victim for some time, even years. Relations within groups and the dynamics of the group become the focus for *paradigm two* (Schott and Sondergaard, 2014). Indeed Schott (2014) acknowledges that moving the focus of bullying to further understanding group dynamics and processes does not diminish the bullying experience for individuals, rather the focus shifts to the process of being accepted, or not, by the group. Thus, views on school bullying have come full circle and return to the work of Heinemann suggesting that bullying is enabled through the maintenance of the group (Horton, 2011). The boundaries of the group are clear to those who are excluded from it (Horton, 2011). If this concept of bullying within groups is considered within the context of the school, students are regularly assigned to groups through classes, years, sets and other ways. There is a possibility that some students might not relate well to some or all of the students in their particular group (Horton, 2011). Olweus (2003) rejects the claims that class size and group dynamics can reinforce bullying and instead focusses on personality characteristics and home environments. He further acknowledges that environment can perpetuate bullying and suggests that behaviours, routine and examples by particular adults play a crucial role in determining how bullying is manifested in school.

By contrast, Rivers and Soutter (1996) propose that bullying is not a result of personality traits but a response to a collection of conditions and needs to be understood and dealt with in terms of the context to which it occurs. Viala (2014) concurs and asserts that focussing on the personal characteristics of children diverts attention away from contextual conditions. Indeed Horton (2011) suggests that if bullying is a widespread problem involving large numbers of students, then it does not seem plausible that it derives entirely from the students' individual personality traits. Horton (2011:269) and others, suggest that bullying might be more usefully understood

“...as a social phenomenon involving ordinary children in particular situations.”

Differences are apparent in these opposing paradigms and conducting school bullying research has been problematic. This is partly due to the difficulty in defining 'bullying' or agreeing a definition of what bullying is. Examining the differences in definition relates to the ontological question 'what is bullying'; where the answer has implications for the epistemological question 'how do we recognise bullying' (Schott, 2014:27).

2.4 What is bullying?

There is no universal agreed definition of bullying (OFSTED, 2003; Cowie and Jennifer, 2008; Rigby, 2008; Schott and Sondergaard, 2014). Rigby (2008) suggests that unless there is a realistic level of agreement on what bullying is then discussing the matter and reducing the problem becomes difficult. Various theories have been used to help explain and understand bullying. Bullying as a learned behaviour, power among individuals, peer pressure and other theories can help explain what bullying is and why it happens. Each theory offers a valuable and interesting insight into bullying but no one theory can claim to provide a complete understanding of bullying behaviour in schools, nor form the basis for an all-inclusive approach to the problem. Rather, theories should be recognised in terms of their individual strengths and weaknesses (Rigby, 2004).

To provide a contextual basis to this study, the next part of this chapter unpicks how bullying has been defined in the wider literature. Four key patterns are explored.

Bullying as defined in the literature

Prominent writers in the field (Olweus, 1995; Smith and Morita, 1999; Rigby, 2000) agree that bullying is *aggressive behaviour* (verbal, physical, relational), involving a *power imbalance* and this behaviour is often *repeated*. Indeed determining whether bullying occurs as a result of the *group or individual* has been contested (Olweus, 1995; Schott and Sondergaard, 2014). These italicised patterns are used as a framework to conceptualise bullying in the wider literature.

Aggressive behaviours (verbal, physical, relational)

Although school bullying definitions differ in their formulation, all subscribe to a focus on aggressive intentionality (Horton, 2011). Nonetheless recognising 'intention' has been problematic. There are difficulties in measuring it as an observer cannot always know the intention of another so validity of self-reports or observation on the effects on the victim need to be considered (Schott, 2014). Indeed it is difficult to determine whether all of those who inflict hurt have a common intention. Given the difficulty with recognising intention, Schott (2014) proposes that 'intention' in a bullying definition is a suggestion

of researchers and not practitioners. Horton (2011) notes that when researchers refer to intention in bullying definitions it is usually referred to as the intention to cause harm. Schott (2014) takes this a step further and asks whether the intention is to cause harm or achieve higher social status in a group.

With bullying regarded as proactive aggression⁷ (Olweus, 2003, Horton, 2011) most of the literature has focussed on whether bullying is characterised by verbal or physical abuse as well as the concept of social exclusion. Oliver and Candappa (2003) for example suggest that verbal abuse was the most prevalent form of bullying for pupils in their study, while pupils in Naylor et al's (2006) study focussed their attention on physical abuse. The House of Commons report (2007) highlights that physical abuse is easier to identify in terms of the actions of the bully and the effects bullying has on the victim, but verbal bullying and forms of social exclusion is harder to identify. Conversely, the ChildLine annual report 2013/2014 conducted by the NSPCC (2014), shows a 28% decrease in the number of young people contacting the helpline in relation to physical bullying. These authors suggest there is a possibility that bullying is moving away from physical abuses to online abuses. However, bullying is the second most common reason (behind family relationships), for 12-15 year olds to contact the help line but tenth in the top ten main concerns for 16-18 year olds, suggesting that as young people get older bullying problems begin to decrease.

Using a mixed methods design with children in years five and eight from a variety of regions and schools, Oliver and Candappa (2003) explored children's experiences of bullying, in particular their definitions of bullying. Participating pupils included 230 focus group participants and 953 questionnaire respondents. The study suggests that verbal abuse was the most prevalent form of bullying for pupils in both year groups. Information is not provided about how this question was phrased. It is possible that findings would be different if children were asked to comment on definitions posed by the researchers rather than providing their own definitions. Lee (2006) reports that in research aimed at finding out what bullying is, it is assumed that the definitions of bullying offered are accurate and that the participants agree with the definition so are able to place their own experiences within the framework.

⁷ Aggressive behaviour which usually happens without provocation or threat from the victim (Olweus, 2003).

Moreover Naylor et al. (2006) used a qualitative design in 51 secondary schools with one open-ended questionnaire question: "*In the space below, please say what you think bullying is*", to compare teachers and pupils' definitions of bullying with those collectively developed by researchers in the field. Teachers (59.6%) reported name-calling as the most prevalent form of bullying while pupils (62.2%) considered physical abuse as prevalent. Open-ended questions allow respondents to answer in their own words showing relevance to pupils and teachers true definitions (May, 2001). The authors used this type of question because it did not place any limitations or influence on the respondents' answers including numbers or types of bullying behaviours or how victims were affected by bullying. The sample consisted of 2,045 teachers and pupils comprising 225 teachers (158 women and 67 men) and 1,820 pupils (466 boys and 460 girls in year seven and 415 boys and 479 girls in year nine).

The use of qualitative methods can shape definitions providing depth of explanation and allow students to voice their own words and add dimensions. Moreover, within the context of '*paradigm two*', a qualitative approach allows students to consider the context of the bullying situation and whether their own role changes or fluctuates as a result of the group they are part of. Oliver and Candappa (2003) for example found that homophobic name-calling was discussed in the focus groups but featured less in questionnaire data. Thomson and Gunter (2008) also showed depth in using a qualitative design. These authors worked with a group of secondary school pupils to research issues of bullying and safety in their school. Their focus group data showed that sexist and racist name-calling focussed around clothing and shoes was considered a common theme in bullying.

In studies obtaining the views of adults and how they define bullying, Craig et al. (2000), Menesini et al. (2002) and Sawyer et al. (2011) found that adults reacted more to cases of physical aggression than to verbal and relational aggression (social exclusion for example). Craig et al. (2000) examined prospective teachers' attitudes toward bullying, using a bullying attitudes questionnaire and eighteen vignettes describing different types of aggression and whether or not teachers had witnessed this behaviour previously. One of the limitations found by these researchers was that attitudes do not always reflect behaviour, thus how a teacher would actually respond to an incident of bullying is not known (Craig et al., 2000). In addition the findings show that it is possible that prospective teachers might not be able to identify and respond to the emotional pain and psychological distress caused by non-physical bullying. Menesini et al. (2002) in their quantitative Italian study investigated what pupils and teachers consider bullying to be

based on cartoon stick figure images, some depicting bullying behaviour and others not. They found that pupils used the term 'aggression' more than teachers when considering severe exclusion and gender exclusion. Sawyer et al. (2011) conducted a qualitative study through in-depth semi-structured interviews on the perceptions of parents whose child was a victim of bullying. These interviews involved a selection of parents of children who self-identified as being frequently bullied by their peers through the safe school questionnaire. Findings from the study showed most parents regarded physical bullying as the most serious form of bullying. In fact, some quotes show that parents did not believe their child was bullied unless a physical attack had occurred

The literature presents differences in how children and adults consider social exclusion (also referred to as social aggression, relational aggression or indirect aggression in the wider literature) in their definition of bullying. Naylor et al. (2006) showed that 12.9% of teachers cite social exclusion compared to 5.3% of pupils in their bullying definitions. In other studies younger children were more likely to suggest social exclusion as bullying than older children (Boulton et al., 2002; and Oliver and Candappa, 2003). Naylor et al. (2006) however showed the older children considered social exclusion when defining bullying.

Within this pattern of aggressive bullying, Lee (2006:67) identifies

“...a subgroup of victims who provoke and gain gratification from the aggressive attention of others”.

He labels these as '*provocative victims*'. Olweus (2003) refers to provocative victims as bully-victims or aggressive victims and states that little is known about this group. Lee (2006) writes about 'attention seeking' and argues whether this could be another element to the bullying situation separate to the 'bully' and the 'victim' and considers that it could form part of the process deciding power and status. Attention seeking from adults unearths many questions around the relationships and dynamics between child and adult (Lee, 2006). Sawyer et al. (2011) consider the reaction that parents had to learning that their child had self-reported as being bullied. While many were surprised by this, some were not surprised and thought bullying was part of childhood. They believed their child had experienced bullying because they had encouraged it.

Power imbalance

It is generally accepted that an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim must be present for bullying to take place (Olweus, 1995; Smith and Morita, 1999; Rigby, 2000). Indeed Vreeman and Carol (2007) argue, that an imbalance of power is what separates 'bullying' from 'aggression'.

However, the imbalance of power as a distinguishing factor in bullying is contested in the wider literature. Cheng et al. (2011) in their Taiwanese study found that all participants, regardless of whether they had been bullied or otherwise, believed an imbalance of power was important in understanding bullying. Conversely, a Spanish study by Cuadrado-Gordillo (2012), found that bullied students did not regard the bullies as being more powerful in the physical, psychological or social sense. However, bullies and witnesses/bystanders considered a power imbalance as an important component of bullying. This finding questions whether a power imbalance is or is not important in defining bullying.

The study by Cheng et al. (2011) was a qualitative study with pupils and school staff. The same design as Naylor et al. (2006) was used and thirteen Taiwanese counties were selected to participate. In analysing their data using grounded theory, Cheng et al. (2011) report both adults (591 school staff) and pupils (967 – 3 bullies, 7 uninvolved and 3 victims from each of the 13 participating schools) perceived bullying as involving a power imbalance in terms of physical power, social advantage and having:

“...powerful parents, being class activity leaders, or using the teacher’s authority, to bully the positional inferior” (p.232).

Bullies, as perceived by participants, were engaged in different types of bullying while being equipped with aggressive intention and power with regards stature and/or number. The authors do not state how the pupils participating were selected in terms of their bullying roles (bully, uninvolved, victim) and Thompson and Smith (2012), highlight some issues with the use of anonymous questionnaires in bullying research. Although useful in determining numbers and creating a picture of what goes on around bullying, using anonymous reporting methods mean that bullies and victims are not identified to the school which can be problematic for resolution. Furthermore, although reliability has been increased due to multiple informants, this method is time consuming (Thompson and Smith, 2012).

Similarly other literature has highlighted accounts of pupils afraid to go to school out of fear of being bullied (Juvonen et al. 2003; Ofsted, 2003; NCB, 2004; House of Commons, 2007). Sullivan et al. (2004) propose that the reason victims of bullying do not come forward and report it is down to the power relationship between the bully and the bullied and by recognising this imbalance of power, addressing the bullying issue becomes a moral matter (Rigby, 2004; Sullivan et al., 2004).

Findings from Cuadrado-Gordillo (2012), suggest that bullies perceive power imbalance as part of the bullying episode. This links to the bullies need for social recognition as

attacking others reiterates their physical and/or psychological superiority. Witnesses also considered power imbalance and intention but victims of bullying did not consider power imbalance in their definitions. Cuadrado-Gordillo (2012) proposes that this could be related to how victims internalise the incident and consider themselves relatively powerless anyway. In this respect a young person with low self-esteem could consider it normal behaviour for others to bully them. This quantitative study used a 30 item questionnaire specifically designed and validated for their study. The intention was to explore whether students apply the criteria of 'repetition' 'power imbalance' and 'intent to hurt' as distinguishing factors between bullying and other aggressive behaviour in the same way some researchers do. Her sample consisted of 2,295 teenagers (54.3% boys and 45.7% girls) aged between 12-16 years in Extremadura in Spain. The questionnaires were completed by 'aggressors' (bullies), 'victims' and 'witnesses'.

It is probable that young people do not use the word 'power' when considering roles in a bullying situation but are more likely to use phrases such as 'afraid' or 'fear' in consideration of the power dynamic. The use of qualitative methodology is more likely than quantitative methodology to identify and understand the language used by young people and in turn equips adults with the knowledge to understand these phenomena from the perspective of young people. However this concept of power among individuals and groups has helped to explain bullying as a socio-cultural phenomenon (Rigby, 2003b) and a power imbalance between the bully and the target. A power differential can be real or perceived and can be related to physical and/or mental competences or to differences in numbers (a group bullying an individual for example) (Schott, 2014).

Historically concepts of power have been understood through dynamics within cultural groups like gender, ethnicity or social class. With gender, males are typically seen as having more power than females and boys are more likely to bully girls than vice-versa (Olweus, 2003; Rigby, 2003b). Physical bullying is more common for boys and verbal bullying more common among girls (Byrne, 1994; OFSTED, 2003; Olweus, 2003). In contrast, Boulton et al. (2002) note that although a general trend exists showing this link between 'male' and 'female' bullying behaviour, there is a substantial proportion of students who do not follow these trends, perhaps suggesting that 'male' and 'female' bullying forms are not exclusive to gender. By comparison, the NSPCC (2014) show that overall, bullying was the main concern for boys who contacted ChildLine in 2013/2014, whereas girls' main concern was around family and relationships. La Fontaine (1991), reported that in calls made to a Bullying Helpline and a Boarding School Helpline run by ChildLine, boys were more likely to report violent bullying than girls. The recent *World*

Health Organization (WHO) collaborative Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) England National Report (Brooks et al., 2015) identified that girls were more likely to report being bullied than boys. Girls however are less likely than boys to say they have bullied somebody else but Brooks et al. (2015) note that this gap between males and females is diminishing. Smith et al. (2002), concur when they report no gender differences in aggressive bullying behaviour. However OFSTED (2003) conclude that both verbal and physical bullying are largely concerned with the demonstration of power used to create fear.

Repetition

The literature shows that adults and pupils differ in perceptions of whether the behaviour needs to be repeated for bullying to occur. Naylor et al. (2006) found that 17.8% of teachers believed bullying included repetition compared to 7.9% of pupils. Similarly Cheng et al. (2011) found repetition to be a prominent feature in defining bullying for adults but less so for students. Cuadrado-Gordillo (2012) found fewer young people (3%) considered repetition as important in the bullying episode. Conversely, Oliver and Candappa (2003) found that repetition was an important feature of bullying. From their discussions with participants, OFSTED (2003) researchers found there is often a difference in how bullying is conducted, it can be one-off or continual, but either way can be damaging. Lee (2006) debates the concept of repetition and whether or not it is a determinant of bullying. He considers the impact this can have on policies and whether or not interjection should happen at the first intended act or once the action has been continuously repeated and evidence gathered (Lee, 2006). Indeed La Fontaine (1991), postulates that excluding behaviours that have only begun from a definition of bullying, supports the notion of some teachers that short term bullying will resolve itself. In these cases it is unlikely that teachers will intervene and students will remain unsupported.

Group or individual bullying

Researchers who are firmly rooted in *paradigm one* in their understanding and explanation of bullying behaviour (or example Olweus, 1995; Smith and Morita, 1999) perceive bullying as individualised. They observe that by understanding more about the bully and victim as individuals the problems associated with bullying can be addressed. Rigby (2000) on the other hand, makes reference to the group as well as the individual, recognising them as not exclusive to each other but rather complimentary in understanding the multifaceted processes of bullying as identified by Schott and Sondergaard (2014).

Schott and Sondergaard (2014) use the example of the school classroom and observe that group bullying takes place where children interact with each other. They discuss the notion of several participant positions in the bullying situation and not just the perpetrator-victim dyad or the perpetrator-victim-bystander triad. Horton (2011) suggests that a child's role in a bullying situation is not fixed but fluid, so a child could bully in one school and not bully in another. Children have reported when asked about what goes on in a bullying situation that a bully is unlikely to uphold the bullying behaviour if they do not have their friends around them (Ma et al., 2001). This finding suggests that children will change their role to fit in with the group processes and dynamics. Indeed Schott (2014) proposes this new shift in thinking about bullying adds to the existing knowledge about the phenomenon gained through *paradigm one*. In other words building on what we already know and moving our thinking towards the social construction of bullying through children's experiences of the groups they occupy.

Throughout this section I have demonstrated that it is not possible to suggest a universally accepted definition of bullying. This view is similar to that of Schott (2014) who observes that research on definitions of school bullying takes place:

“...in specific national, cultural and linguistic environments – all of which contribute components to the more general understanding of bullying.”
(Schott, 2014:24)

The final section of this chapter presents a review of the literature on bullying in private day and boarding schools before presenting a rationale for the study.

2.5 Bullying in private day and boarding schools

Most of the research about bullying in boarding schools is historical (Neddam, 2004), anecdotal (Poynting and Donaldson, 2005), or biographical (Duffell, 2010) and focuses on boys drawing on memoirs, media documents or interviews with adults who are ex-boarders, or “boarding school survivors” (Duffell, 2010: xii). Some recent studies centre on current students. Morgan (2004) collected questionnaire data from an array of maintained and independent boarding schools in England; Stoudt (2009) and Stoudt et al. (2010) involved boys from an elite private day school in researching bullying at their American school and Pfeifer and Pinquart (2014) examined differences in bullying experiences of boarding students and day students in Germany. One older study from La Fontaine (1991), analysed calls from children to a dedicated Bullying Line and a separate Boarding School Line both established by the Department of Education and Science and run by ChildLine. The Boarding School Line was established following a

television programme about sexual abuse at one English boarding school. This section presents a critical discussion of these limited studies and concludes with a rationale for studying bullying in a private day and boarding school.

2.5.1 Literature review

Literature examining the perspectives of adults who once attended a boarding school tend to suggest a negative view of this experience. Schaverien (2004) for example, proposes that historically children have not been encouraged to express emotions at boarding schools, which could manifest itself in psychological distress in adulthood. This is complicated by the fact that going to boarding school is considered a privilege with some parents making huge financial sacrifices to provide this opportunity for their children. Schaverien (2004) argues that the notion of sending children to boarding school as 'good for them' has not been challenged in the literature. Although her work is based on adults who attended boarding school as young children, Schaverien (2004:685), when speaking of the present day system, suggests that despite "rumoured" improvements in boarding schools, cases of bullying and sexual abuse continue "in the so called 'best of schools'". In the UK, National minimum standards for boarding schools have been introduced by the Department of Health (DH) from 2002 and also from the Department of Education (DoE) from 2013. The latter sporadically mentions bullying while the former encompasses standards to specifically deal with the problem of bullying. Standard two (of the DH 2002 standards) states:

"The school should have an effective policy on countering bullying, which is known to parents, boarders and staff and which is implemented successfully in practice." (DH, 2002:3).

However just because a standard, although a minimum one, has been introduced does not eradicate bullying. What it does acknowledge is that bullying has been highlighted as an issue in private boarding schools and steps are being implemented to protect boarders from bullying in the same way as state secondary schools.

On the contrary to this negative view of boarding schools, Morgan (2004) found that most young people and parents in his study believed that boarding school offers a positive social life, cultural awareness, social skills and independence. This study entitled '*Being a Boarder*' was conducted by the then Children's Rights Director for England, Dr Roger Morgan. The report collated views from 385 boarders and 142 parents from 36 boarding schools (both private and maintained) through questionnaire data and suggests that bullying is not a major problem in boarding schools. The sampling approach was simple random sampling whereby every 10th school on a DfES list were invited to participate

(Morgan, 2004). This approach ensures that everyone in the total population under study has an equal chance of being selected (Parahoo, 2006). Questionnaires were sent to schools who were asked to distribute them to the four youngest and four oldest boarders in each boarding house and their parents. This approach could be construed as a weakness as the population in between the older and younger students was excluded and a true representation of the student voice is not presented. Schott and Sondergaard (2014) suggest that focussing on the bullying experiences of specific individuals can exclude other children within the context of the school. Therefore a picture of what life is like at boarding school cannot be captured. The age range of boarders was between 8 and 21 years highlighting the upper age bracket of older boarders with a high number of those responding (21%) aged over 18 years. Morgan (2004) states that this number is higher than the proportion of all boarders aged over 18, estimated to be 13%.

In an open question inviting participants to identify the worst thing about being at boarding school nobody identified bullying as a major cause for concern (Morgan, 2004). For those who did comment on bullying, they focussed predominantly on verbal bullying and parents believed the schools dealt effectively with the issues but said that bullying can be persistent and its “always needing to be dealt with” (Morgan, 2004:14). There are concerns that bullying in boarding school is different to bullying in day school because it is:

“...not as easy to escape from, as pupils are constantly enclosed in the school’s environment.” (Morgan, 2004:14).

Carlisle and Roffes (2007) reiterate this point; six of their 15 adult male participants attended boarding school and they observe that unlike day school, bullying for boarders extends to the night-time; resonating with Duffell’s (2010) findings in his book about the experiences of ex-boarders. Schaverien (2004) asserts that boarding school can offer a sense of relief for those students who experience bullying or neglect in the family home.

Morgan’s (2004) study acknowledges the public view of boarding school as a place with high incidents of physical bullying, low emotional care and extreme homesickness but his study did not uncover these issues for parents or boarders. Indeed boarders had fewer concerns than their parents. By contrast, Poynting and Donaldson (2005) did a media analysis of the true events of repeated group sexual assaults at an elite private boarding school for boys in Australia. This story was reported in the national media whereby two boys were subjected to 75 sexual assaults in front of spectators, by a group of four boys. The authors concluded:

“These events and the responses of the expensive, Anglican, ruling-class school and its community tell a good deal about the character of ruling-class boys’ schooling in general and are far from being the isolated, individual cases that Trinity’s official spokesmen claim.” (Poynting and Donaldson, 2005:325)

These authors do not suggest that school bullying is limited to private schools but defend the types of bullying they identify as being endemic to “ruling-class boys’ private schools” (p.325). These authors concur with La Fontaine (1991), Schaverien (2004) and Hodges et al. (2013) when they report that boarding school students experience separation and loneliness from their families and friends therefore forming bonds in groups calling for allegiance and attachment to tradition. Group ridicule and punishment is part of this process, evident in the boarding school tradition of ‘fagging’⁸ which condoned bullying as a privilege of age (Schaverien, 2004; Duffell, 2010). Neddham (2004) in his historical paper on Thomas Arnold of Rugby⁹ suggests that this system of fagging allowed bullying to happen in the 1800s. Neddham (2004) goes on to say that memoirs collected from students at the Rugby boarding school during Arnold’s time, suggest that it was not the prefects who initiated bullying but the junior students. Neddham (2004) describes the cruelty imposed on some of the boarders at Rugby. Indeed this was not the case for the majority of students with incidents varying between boarding houses and dormitories (Neddham, 2004).

Poynting and Donaldson (2005) considered statements from witnesses who were too afraid to report the bullying they were aware of. These authors report that “dobbing” (p.329) is seen as taboo in boarding schools and nobody will report bullying in an environment where brutality is considered ‘normal’ behaviour. What Poynting and Donaldson (2005) describe in their study is clearly sexual assault to be dealt with by the courts. Although the four boys did face the children’s courts none had convictions recorded and were all given good behaviour bonds. As a result of the court’s decision the behaviour was viewed as bullying and downplayed by the perpetrators families who dismissed it as normal behaviour in boarding schools. Indeed a mother of one of the perpetrators likened the events to usual conduct in boarding schools and rugby clubs. Studies focussing on the biographical, historical and anecdotal accounts of the boarding school experience suggest that bullying is part of school life (Neddham, 2004; Schaverien, 2004; Duffell, 2010) and is celebrated in the boardrooms when bullies enter the workforce (Poynting and Donaldson, 2005; Duffell, 2010).

⁸ Younger boys who were glorified servants to older boys.

⁹ Thomas Arnold was a headmaster at the Rugby boarding school for boys in the 1800s.

La Fontaine (1991), suggests the view of bullying being a part of school life is an adult view while students think differently. She suggests that children's definitions of bullying are broad and inclusive with no distinctions between 'real' and 'perceived' bullying behaviours, while adults tend to dismiss some of the behaviours children identify as hurtful as being a part of growing up. This conclusion was made based on how children spoke about bullying when calling the helplines and in a context where bullying had not been defined for them by adults. La Fontaine (1991) suggests that such an approach is different from other forms of research where bullying has been defined for child participants based on adult understanding and perceptions of bullying.

It became apparent in the research that children and young people, at boarding school, might not have called the helpline due to a lack of privacy in accessing a phone and discussing sensitive issues, but the problem of bullying was evident (La Fontaine, 1991). The most common problem for boarders, based on 213 analysed case notes to the Boarding School Line, was bullying. The majority of calls about bullying to both helplines came from children who had been bullied themselves (85% from the Bullying Line and 99% from the Boarding School Line). Girls made up the majority of callers and despite the fact that more boys attended boarding school, the majority of callers were girls (71% compared to 65% of girls calling the Bullying Line). This finding suggest that's bullying for boarding school girls is a cause for concern. However this finding also supports other research suggesting that girls are more likely to seek support for bullying than boys (Brooks et al., 2015). The data showed little evidence of traditional boarding school bullying: that is senior students systematically bullying younger ones, as previous studies have highlighted (Schaverien, 2004; Poynting and Donaldson 2005). However, in a few schools, older prefects and monitors were using their positions to bully younger students. These younger students suggested that teachers would not believe them if they reported the behaviour with some children suggesting that their complaint was dismissed by staff members. Furthermore, the overall data showed that of those children who called the Bullying Line and sought adult intervention, 72% said it worked. However fewer boarders received positive adult intervention with four times as many reporting a negative result (La Fontaine, 1991).

In hearing directly from students about how they view bullying Stoudt (2009) conducted a PAR project with a group of school students and staff members in an American private school. This research was carried out as a result of findings from a previous study on:

“...socio-emotional experiences of boys in order to evaluate the effectiveness of a peer counseling program designed to encourage alternatives to hegemonic masculine performances.” (Stoudt, 2009:9).

These findings exposed a large degree of “masculine-oriented bullying” (Stoudt, 2009:9) so a decision was made to conduct further research. A team of student researchers and another comprising staff members worked alongside the author to research bullying at the school (Stoudt, 2009). The student group included four senior boys from a social psychology class. The students worked together to develop a survey-interview which they conducted with a representative sample (N=96) of boys from grades nine to twelve. The staff researchers interviewed ten members of school staff using questions based on the student survey-interview (Stoudt, 2009; Stoudt et al., 2010).

Conversations with the whole social psychology class enabled the student research team to conceptualise the meaning of bullying in their school. Stoudt (2009) discusses these conversations and includes direct quotes from the social psychology class about their own role in bullying episodes. Portraying the student voices in this way allows us as readers to gain an individual and collective view about bullying at this school. Nevertheless, similar to the work of Morgan (2004), this study excluded the voices of younger students in their conceptualising of ideas. McNamee and Seymour (2012) suggest that older children or young people are usually those approached to participate in research activities due to competencies and understanding.

Through the use of PAR, Stoudt (2009) suggests that this approach to research in privileged groups can interrupt the power dynamics present in these institutions. Stoudt (2009) makes his own assumptions clear and discusses how his assumptions were challenged by the student researchers. The benefit of insider knowledge through the student researchers proved pivotal to this project.

The student researchers suggested that bullying was the norm at school and described it as “white noise” as it was taken for granted and always there (Stoudt et al., 2010:35). This concurs with previous boarding school research (Poynting and Donaldson, 2004; Schaverien, 2004; Duffell, 2010). By involving the student researchers fully in data analysis they were able to extract from the data what it was like to be a victim, bully and bystander in the bullying episode (Stoudt, 2009; Stoudt et al., 2010). Additionally the student researchers could relate their own experiences within these roles (Stoudt et al., 2010). Stoudt et al. (2010) note this level of involvement allowed the student researchers to acknowledge the fluidity of the roles in a bullying episode and not to view bullying as solely from the perspective of “one dominant figure terrorizing the rest” (Stoudt et al., 2010:35). Findings located to this elite school showed three important themes.

1. Bullying helped to establish power and hierarchy: The student researchers considered initiations (“hazing”) which often involved younger students being forced into the conventional norms of the group to establish hierarchy and power (Stoudt et al., 2010:36). This is consistent with other literature on boarding schools (Schaverien, 2004; Poynting and Donaldson, 2005; Duffell, 2010). Stoudt et al. (2010) identified verbal bullying as a particular issue in the school. Students and staff researchers reported that the ability to respond quickly to verbal abuse was regarded as a sign of intelligence. The link between bullying and intelligence helped to conceptualise the bullying as normal behaviour and as a part of social interaction at school (Stoudt et al., 2010). Similarly, Duffell (2010) notes that boarders needed to be sharp in their responses to verbal attacks to prove they were not weak and therefore targets for bullies.
2. Bullying often centred on emotional uncertainty and friendships: Students in the research worried about being viewed as separate from the group. Stories from the student researchers showed that the ridiculing of one person in the classroom led to bonding for the entire class. This finding is consistent with Duffell (2010) who used the example of a boy who could say something naïve on the first day and could be labelled with a nickname that could follow him throughout his schooling but in turn provide entertainment for the rest of the class. Stoudt et al. (2010), report that the student researchers spoke about the close bonds they had with their classmates which they attributed to ridiculing and teasing. Connections between certain bullying types, having fun and developing social relationships were therefore evident in the data.
3. Bullying was often about maintaining hegemonic boundaries: Staff and student researchers reported on the importance of socioeconomic status in school. Teachers spoke about witnessing verbal putdowns such as teasing somebody about where they came from or what job their parents had. Student researchers spoke about the importance of being brought to school in the best car; or the best clothes on days when uniform was not required to avoid verbal ridicule. One of the biggest putdowns reported by students and staff members was referring to somebody as “gay” or “a girl” (Stoudt et al., 2010:39). Insults associated with socioeconomic status and homophobic verbal abuse helped to define normality at this school. Some racial and anti-Semitic comments and jokes were seen as part of the norm and imposed group boundaries indicating who is in the group and who is out of the group, as well as what is acceptable and what is not.

During the interviews, staff were made aware of the extent of the bullying issue in the school from the perspective of the students. This enabled these adults to rethink their personal assumptions on bullying and reconsider the experiences of students on the receiving end of 'traditions' and 'harmful fighting' in school (Stoudt, 2009).

Looking more broadly at the literature and how bullying has been compared in private day and boarding schools, Pfeiffer and Pinquart (2014) conducted the first quantitative German study comparing these schools. No other studies were found comparing these school types in this review. The German study involved students aged 12 to 19 years from six day schools and nine boarding schools.

“All participants were students from the highest school track, which qualifies students for university upon graduation.” (Pfeiffer and Pinquart, 2014:4).

Students were asked to complete a Social Experience Questionnaire during class time and the final sample consisted of 300 boarding school students and 406 day school students. Asking students to complete the questionnaire in class could be considered as a weakness as it is not clear whether students were provided with privacy to answer the questions truthfully or whether students felt compelled to complete the questionnaire because their classmates completed it.

Pfeiffer and Pinquart (2014) report differences in all socio-demographic data between the two groups. Boarding students were older, which is consistent with UK research (see Morgan, 2004); more likely to be male, consistent with most of the limited research on boarding schools (see Schaverien, 2004 and Poynting and Donaldson, 2005); and parents of boarding students had achieved higher academic qualifications than parents of students in day schools.

Findings suggest that boarders were more likely to be perpetrators and victims of bullying than day students (Pfeiffer and Pinquart, 2014). Spending extra time with peers provides more opportunities for bullying in boarding schools when compared to day schools. The boarding school environment and how students socialise together could be a reason why there are differences between boarding and day students (Pfeiffer and Pinquart, 2014). Boarding school is associated with separation from parents, friends and familiar routines over weekdays and weekends and Pfeiffer and Pinquart (2014) infer that this can limit the influence parents have on preventing or reducing problem behaviours like bullying. Boarders who were bullied, reported a lower level of life-satisfaction than bullied students attending day schools (Pfeiffer and Pinquart, 2014). Although the other studies in this literature review were not comparative studies (with day schools and boarding schools)

they suggest that students who were bullied at boarding school have high levels of psychological distress in adulthood (Schaverien 2004; Duffell, 2010).

2.5.2 Rationale for researching bullying in a private day and boarding school

Findings from Pfeiffer and Pinquart (2014) and Stoudt et al. (2010) are consistent with the philosophy of *paradigm two* (Schott and Sondergaard, 2014) where bullying roles are considered fluid within and outside particular peer groups. For boarding schools, context is crucial to understanding the phenomenon as distinct from bullying in day school, as students are spending the majority of their time interacting together (La Fontaine, 1991). Horton (2011) considers the boundaries of the group are clear by those who are excluded from it, a finding supported by La Fontaine (1991) and Stoudt et al. (2010). If this concept of bullying within groups is considered within the context of the school, students are regularly assigned to groups through classes, years, sets and other ways (Horton, 2011). There is a possibility that this sense of fitting in within predetermined groups is exacerbated in boarding schools as students live there and do not have the opportunity to leave the groups in the way day students do. This could be a reason why Pfeiffer and Pinquart (2014) found lower levels of life-satisfaction among bullied boarding students than bullied day students.

In boarding school, the risk of bullying is a constant challenge and a challenge that is part of boarding school's past legacy (La Fontaine, 1991; Hodges et al., 2013). Issues around hierarchy are evident in private boarding schools where some studies suggest that bullies are admired and tolerated (Poynting and Donaldson, 2005). Neddham (2004) describes the bullies in Rugby during the 1800s as the bigger boys who were sporty and idle while the bullied were 'chosen' from weaker, hard-working solemn boys. Stoudt et al. (2010) suggest that their participants recognised the notion of victims as being weaker and reported that students must be able to defend themselves in an intelligent way to avoid being viewed as weak. Stoudt et al. (2010) report on the added pressure placed on students at this elite school. Pressure with homework and coursework is a given but students equally feel the socioeconomic pressure to fit in with their classmates. If they do not have equal or elevated socioeconomic status from their peers they are likely to be marginalised from the group. These pressures combined with huge financial sacrifices made by parents (Schaverien, 2004) could be a reason why bullying remains unreported in private day and boarding schools. This in turn potentially adds to the burden of normalising bullying behaviour in these schools which is a theme stressed by many (see for example Duffell, 2010; Stoudt et al. 2010, Pfeiffer and Pinquart, 2014).

Some of these reviewed studies (Schaverien, 2004; Poynting and Donaldson, 2005; Stoudt, 2009; Stoudt et al., 2010) suggest some similar issues between boarders and day students at private schools. As well as the pressures to conform to group norms to fit in with the class or group, boarders and day students feel an allegiance to their schools which could be another reason why bullying remains unreported or is considered normal behaviour within the context of the school. Morgan (2004) stated that nobody in his study identified bullying as a major cause for concern. It could be argued that boarders in Morgan's study did not report the 'true' picture of bullying at school due to the same issues identified throughout this review.

A limitation in this review is the lack of research focussing specifically on the boarding school experiences of girls or mixed gender boarding school (with the exception of La Fontaine, (1991), Morgan (2004) and Pfeiffer and Pinquart (2014) who consider mixed gender). Schaverien (2004) notes that many girls at boarding school experienced bullying involving belittling their sexuality and academic ability while La Fontaine, (1991) suggest that bullying could be more of a problem for girls at boarding school than for boys. Several studies in this review focussed on the views of adults who were once students at a boarding school, so it could be argued that their experiences could have shifted overtime. Some studies (La Fontaine, 1991; Morgan, 2004; Stoudt, 2009; Stoudt et al., 2010; Pfeifer and Pinquart, 2014) focussed on the experiences of current students but only one study (Stoudt, 2009, Stoudt et al., 2010), involved students fully in the research process investigating an area of global concern to young people. A qualitative approach using methods aimed at hearing the voices of current students is needed to tease out the issues students are potentially experiencing. Hendrick (2008) argues that unlike other minority groups of the past (women for example), who have had their voices heard in a historical context through sources like newspaper articles, court proceedings and other sources, children are rarely heard. This is mainly age related and children are consequently limited in how they can contribute to social action in the way other minority groups have been able to. Furthermore how historians interpret sources is governed by their own methodological and ideological stance. If their view of children is one that perceives them as passive figures against the backdrop of adult life, historians are more likely to exclude the child's voice from history (Hendrick, 2008).

Having reviewed the literature and policy context in this chapter, the rationale for the requirement of further knowledge of bullying in a private day and boarding school is threefold. There is a need to:

1. Hear from current boarders and day students about their experiences of bullying and identify the issues pertinent to them now.
2. Understand how bullying is defined in a private day and boarding school.
3. There is a need for involving children in research on their own terms.

2.6 Chapter summary

This chapter considered the shift from understanding bullying from the individualised personality traits of the victim and perpetrator to understanding more about the group; the changing roles within it and how the dynamics of the group can allow or discourage bullying from taking place. The literature on school bullying definitions has been critically appraised and concluded that bullying definitions are fluid and context specific. This chapter supports the notion that there is no 'one-definition-fits-all' approach to understanding what bullying is (ontological position) and how bullying can be recognised (epistemological position).

The scarcity of research on bullying in private day and boarding schools is noted with studies focussing on historical (Neddham, 2004), anecdotal (Poynting and Donaldson, 2005), or biographical (Duffell, 2010) accounts of the bullying experiences from adults who once attended boarding schools. Newer studies (Morgan, 2004; Stoudt, 2009; Stoudt et al., 2010; Pfeiffer and Piquart, 2014) include the views of current students but only one (Stoudt, 2009; Stoudt et al., 2010) actively involved students as researchers. Bullying in private day and boarding schools may be different to bullying in maintained schools due in part to a boarding school's past legacy (La Fontaine, 199; Hodges et al., 2013) and the potential normalisation of verbal and physical assaults as something that 'just happens' (La Fontaine, 1991; Poynting and Donaldson, 2005; Stoudt, 2009). There is a need for further bullying research to ascertain the bullying problems pertinent to students now. Equally, involving students as active participants in the research process (Stoudt, 2009; Stoudt et al., 2010) enables them to contribute to the generation of new knowledge and theories relevant to their own school (Schott and Sondergaard, 2014).

The next chapter will critically review the literature on the social construction of the 'child' and 'childhood' and describe how a paradigm shift has enabled researchers and practitioners to consider the notion that children are social actors and pertinent to the construction of knowledge and theories in areas of research of interest to them.

Chapter 3: Children and Research

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I consider the concepts of 'child' and 'childhood' by focussing on key changes in ideologies and attitudes to both concepts. I then critique the modern shifts and policy drivers which have contributed to a paradigm shift conceptualising children as social actors with valid contributions to make. This chapter ends with a discussion on the importance of children's participation in the research process.

3.2 Defining 'the Child' and 'Childhood'

3.2.1 The child

The UNCRC (1989) defines a child as any individual under the age of 18 years unless the age of majority is reached earlier in the country that is a signatory to the convention. This definition does not allow for distinctions between babies, toddlers, teenagers or young people. James and James (2008) acknowledge that in most societies, distinctions are made between babies and toddlers at one end of the spectrum and young people or teenagers at the other. The Children and Young Persons Act (1933) England – a provision still in force today – states that a 'child' becomes legally defined as a 'young person' at age 14. As such a 'child' is regarded as a human being of a certain age with no reference to competence, psychological, social or mental development.

James and James (2008) in defining the 'child' discuss characteristics of physical *and* mental development as well as psychological and social development, which are less evolved in children than in adults. Peters and Johansson (2012) suggest that, historically, the way we [adults] speak about and conceptualise children insinuates that children are a different type of human being to adults and therefore "not-yets" (Peters and Johansson, 2012:57). This position emerged from the developmental paradigm where children were recognised as being on a journey towards becoming full human beings (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2008; Corsaro, 2011). A 'not-yet' is unable to participate in politics, vote or make decisions (Peters and Johansson, 2012). Children are consequently considered incompetent and in need of protection on their passage to 'becoming' adults (Uprichard, 2008). Indeed Qvortrup (1994) argues that there is nothing mysterious about children (or childhood), that children are human beings and not 'human becomings'.

Children have needs and interests of their own away from adults but Qvortrup (1994) suggests that we do not think this way about adults because we do not need to justify adults as a distinct structural group in the way we do about children. Power relationships

are central here because children are usually dependent on adults and adults view this dependence as part of the natural order (Qvortrup, 1994). Adults, however, do not always use this power and authority positively and Lee (2001) asserts that the more adults are able to make decisions for children and speak on their behalf the more likely they are to silence them. In some cases this silence allows for unfair treatment of children. Children are not always reliant on adults though, as can be seen in the case of street children who care for themselves and each other and young carers who care for themselves, other children and at times adults. In these cases, children make decisions without adult intervention and often do not engage with adults at all.

Traditional theorists support the discourse of the 'becoming' child where adults are regarded as mature, rational and competent while children are immature, irrational and incompetent (Tisdall and Punch, 2012). This notion of the 'becoming' child is problematic for two reasons argues Uprichard (2008). The first is the future emphasis. If we consider children as 'becoming' this influences how we conceptualise children and their status in the present and our anticipation of what children become could be wrong. The second problem is that 'becoming' implies that children are incompetent and competency is only reached in adulthood. This position assumes, therefore that adults are competent at everything while children are not competent at anything (Uprichard, 2008). However Lee (2001) argues that adults, like children, are also 'becoming'. In their adult life adults are striving to reach fulfilment with their own working lives and intimate relationships. By this respect adults and children are regarded as both 'becoming', as we strive for more, and 'being' as we are in our current state (Lee, 2001). Uprichard (2008) supports this argument and suggests that the two approaches of being and becoming are problematic when considered separately.

James and James (2008) acknowledge that children become adults as part of the aging process and not as a result of competence or achievement. Age, they argue is a key component in the differentiation between adults and children. Hinton (2008), and James and James (2008), propose that developmental psychologists have been responsible for labelling children as 'incompetent' by placing them at particular developmental stages and therefore limiting adults views about the potential children have. Woodhead and Faulkner (2008) argue that theories of developmental psychology remain highly influential in research, policy and professional training and have laid the foundations for understanding child development so should not be fully disregarded. James and James (2008) dispute the differentiating factors used by developmental psychologists and claim they lack precision. These authors use the example of adults who are less

psychologically developed than some children or indeed shorter in stature than some children but age differentiates the two. In reality, children are often excluded from relevant debates due to this view of incompetence, but Hinton (2008) postulates that the theories of social psychology can enable us to understand “incompetence bias” (p.293) and empower children to participate in an appropriate manner. She suggests that continuous adult-child dialogue encourages adults to understand the child’s socio-cultural background where language capacity and children’s ability are not being confused.

In order to arrive at a definition of ‘the child’ for the purpose of this study, it is important to consider the definitions of ‘childhood’.

3.2.2 Childhood

Defining ‘childhood’ in the literature is equally as problematic as defining the ‘child’. Although the ‘child’ as an ‘object’ has not changed over-time, our perception of childhood has evolved (Gergen, 1985):

“The concept of ‘child’ concerns an embodied individual defined as non-adult, while the notion of ‘childhood’ is a more general and abstract term used to refer to the status ascribed by adults to those who are defined as not adult” (Gittins, 2009:37).

Gittins (2009) argues that ‘childhood’ is a construct defined by adults. We have all been children, so therefore have our own ideas of what childhood is and what it should be. However as adults, our childhood is past; lost to us over time through filtered memory so ‘childhood’ as an adult construct consists of an array of contradictory memories, myths and desires (Gittins, 2009). Kellett (2010b) accepts that adults have more knowledge than children in many aspects of life but children are the experts in childhood and what it is like to be a child now.

The temporal state of childhood as a phase of the life course before adulthood is acknowledged in the literature (Lee, 2001; Uprichard, 2008). Qvortrup (1994) concurs when he states children grow up and therefore out of childhood and the next generation occupy the space. However although the structural space of childhood is a constant, the experiences of each child will be different and different societies will mark differences between ‘children’ and ‘adults’ in different ways. Qvortrup (1994) suggests we should consider this time as *childhoods* rather than *childhood*. Hinton (2008) argues that in some societies, childhood is not defined by age but recognised through negotiation among

family, peers and the wider society. In other societies, employment, physical development and sexual activity signify the end of childhood (Hinton, 2008).

There is a need to consider the importance of the social and cultural contexts and practices that, along with age and developmental criteria, add to the definition of child, children and childhood (Lee, 2001; James and James, 2008). It is through using these criteria to define the child that children can be defined in any society at any time and has led to discussions around the social construction of childhood as well as the notion that children are culturally relative (James and James, 2008). Sociologists, argues Thomas (2012), have shown that competence is situated and achieved through social interactions with each other rather than being an individual quality.

The theory that childhood is historically and socially constructed began with the work of Philippe Áries who rejected the notion that childhood is biologically given or fundamentally 'natural' (Gittins, 2009). His work was based on the lack of representation of children and childhood in medieval art where he believed children were perceived as miniature adults (Áries, 1962). Although this work has been criticised (Wilson, 1980; Peters and Johansson, 2012), Áries' descriptions of childhood raise questions about the historical, social and cultural nature of childhood, shaped by transformations of family and educational institutions (James and James, 2008; Gittins, 2009; Graham, 2011; Peters and Johansson, 2012). Graham (2011:1534) argues that the work of Áries in the 1960s paved the way towards an understanding of childhood as a:

“...distinct and separate phase of the life course framing the development of research and professional paradigms of childhood.”

From the above discussion, there is no obvious definition of 'child' or 'childhood'. For the purpose of this study I am aligning my views with those of James and James (2008) and Hendrick (2008) who propose that *children* are social actors and informants in their own lives while childhood is a structural feature of all societies and the early phase in the life course of all people in all societies representing the process of maturation to adulthood. For the purpose of this thesis, the age restriction of birth to 18 years, which has defined the child, does not apply. In boarding schools, students tend to be older than students in mainstream secondary school¹⁰ so the 'child' in this case, is every student at *The Olive Tree School*:

“The historicized approaches to children....clarifies that childhood and children are subject to how we see them. The ways we live with, think of, talk

¹⁰ See for example Morgan (2004) in section 2.5

about and treat children (the grammar of “child”) manifest what a child is and what the word “child” means to us.” (Peters and Johansson, 2012:57).

Recent national and international policy developments have recognised children as social actors and not just beneficiaries of adult socialisation. The next section considers the national and international modern shifts and policy drivers, which have acted as a catalyst in promoting change for how ‘child’ and ‘childhood’ are perceived.

3.3 International and National Policy Drivers

The children’s rights movement stemmed from the 1924 Declaration of Geneva outlining the universal treatment of all children. Although a welcome step forward, this declaration focused on the concept of a modernist approach to childhood with the view that children were reliant on adults (Prout, 2005). This idea, underpinned by the child protection movement, was up-turned and children’s rights were given further impetus by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989). This Act recognises that children’s opinions and interests must be taken seriously so it includes ‘participation’ as a fundamental right for children alongside ‘protection’ and ‘provision’ (Hinton, 2008; Reynaert et al., 2009). The right for all children to be involved in decisions made about and for them through participation is upheld by Article 12 of the UNCRC:

“State Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.” (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989:5).

Kellett (2010b) advocates that the term ‘due weight’ is possibly the most powerful directive in Article 12 because adults are required to not only hear what children are saying but to actively listen to them. Kirby et al. (2003b) propose that listening to children needs to inspire change. In essence, acting on what children say is what makes their participation meaningful (Kirby et al., 2003b). Thomas (2012) raises further questions about who defines ‘the child who is capable of making their own decisions’ and what, in practice, defines ‘due weight’. Kellett (2010b) posits the need for change so children are actively listened to, including recognition by adults that children have a unique valuable contribution to make, which should be valued and respected. However Kellett (2010b) goes on to argue that actively listening to children requires good will and therefore explains the discrepancies in how children’s voices are conceptualised on a global scale. Indeed Kirby et al. (2003b) and Davey (2010) recognise that many one-off participatory activities are happening in organisations but few embed participation within the culture.

Regardless of this vagueness, Article 12 has enabled children to have a voice globally in personal matters and inclusion through participation in public matters (Thomas, 2012).

The UNCRC (1989) has been ratified by 193 states, including the UK, making it the most widely endorsed convention (Welty and Lundy, 2013). Each state therefore has a legal obligation to ensure children have a say in how decisions are made about and for them. Through participation, changes have been made to the social, cultural and economic conditions of children's lives (Prout, 2005). Conversely, Welty and Lundy (2013) assert that limited knowledge of Article 12 makes implementation problematic. These authors suggest that understanding Article 12 is not only about good practice but is also about having greater awareness regarding the respect afforded to children's views. Practitioners and researchers need to be honest with children about what is possible with their views, given resource and other restrictions (Sinclair, 2004).

Academic discourse, since the adoption of the UNCRC (1989), has shifted from viewing children as incompetent and lacking responsibility to one where children are regarded as competent in their own right (Reynaert et al., 2009; Stoecklin, 2012). Within this paradigm, researchers reject much of the former debate on children's rights, which focused on child welfare from a protectionist perspective heavily influenced by a paternalistic approach (Lowden, 2002; Hendrick, 2003; Prout, 2005). The UNCRC (1989), like many international conventions, allows for interpretations and sometimes manipulation of its phrasing, for example Tisdall and Punch (2012) question Article 3 and ask in whose interest are the 'best interests' of the child being addressed. Equally, competency to participate is decided by adults (McNamee and Seymour, 2012) as well as allocation of budgets for participatory activities (Davey, 2010). Ironically the UNCRC (1989) was developed by adults with no input from children despite its ethos to involve children in decisions made about them (Tisdall and Punch, 2012). Hinton (2008) argues that the voice of the child is still muted when it comes to the allocation of resources used in the name of the child and although the child is perceived as a person with rights on a global front, how this is implemented in practice varies across the world.

In the UK, three developments during the 1980s were crucial to the promotion of children's political and civil rights (Willow, 2002; Hendrick, 2003; Roche, 2004) and added to the academic and practice discourse that children are able to contribute to individual and collective change:

1. The Gillick judgement (1986) increased understanding of competence in older children and refers to the legal case in 1986 where the British courts ruled that those under 16 years could consent to medical treatment once they showed sufficient understanding and ability to make sensible choices (Willow, 2002; Kellett et al., 2004).
2. The Cleveland inquiry (1988) showed children as people and not objects of concern. Paediatricians in Cleveland wrongly identified some children as victims of sexual abuse and the children were forcefully removed from their parents/carers care. The inquiry showed conflicts in professional working and a lack of information sharing. In addition some professionals failed to acknowledge the views, wishes and opinions of the adults or children involved (Allen and Stanley, 2011).
3. The Children Act (1989) promoted a more democratic relationship between government, local authorities, parents and children (Willow, 2002; Roche 2004; Thomas 2012). Children now had the right to be legally represented in proceedings, separately from their parents; they had the right to be consulted in relation to decisions directly affecting them; they had the right to complain about state care they were in receipt of (Moran-Ellis, 2010). This law, although regarded as a catalyst for UK policy change, did not relate to all children, only those deemed 'in need' or 'at risk of significant harm' (Cooper, 1998).

At the turn of the century, the Children Act (2004) passed under the auspices of *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*, applied to all children regardless of need (Waterman and Fowler, 2004). This Act modified the Children Act (1989) mainly as a result of the Victoria Climbié inquiry. The sharing of information amongst health and social care professionals working with children was seen as central to this Act (Moran-Ellis, 2010). Moreover, Davey (2010) in a report commissioned by the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) to examine children's participation in decision-making in England, found that since the introduction of the Children Act (2004):

“...there has been a steady rise in the number of structural mechanisms to enable children to participate in decision-making through student voice and democracy initiatives in schools and youth forums. There has also been a cultural change in the value children, adults and organisations are now placing on children's views.” (p.7)

The creation of the Children's Commissioner for England by the Children Act (2004) was a welcome measure. The other UK countries already had a Children's Commissioner

(Wales in 2001, Northern Ireland in 2003 and Scotland in February 2004). Fundamental to this role is listening to children, although the Commissioners did not have any lead on children's rights (Moran-Ellis, 2010). More recently, reforms were made to the role of the Commissioner in England with substantial developments towards children's rights (CRAE, 2014). The Children and Families Act came into force in February 2014 and contains a directive, requiring the Commissioner to protect and promote children's rights as well as implement the UNCRC in England (CRAE, 2014). Although the Commissioner has increased powers and independence from government, they are still appointed by government. Furthermore the Commissioner for England has less powers and autonomy than the Children's Commissioners in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland (CRAE, 2014).

Overall, the UK has witnessed a paradigm shift in terms of how 'children' and indeed 'childhood' are conceptualised in policy, practice and research. The voice of the child is increasingly recognised as paramount in all developments about them, although barriers to participation are identified above.

Recent national policy changes

In 2010 the UK came under the leadership of a Coalition Government¹¹, the first peacetime Coalition since the 1930s (Brooks, 2013). Prior to 2010, New Labour (1997-2010) led the UK and laid the foundations for the Coalition's formulation of policies around children and young people, recognising the importance of acknowledging their participation rights (Brooks, 2012; Davies, 2013).

Brooks (2013) suggests that the Coalition was committed to delivering on its policies with respect to young people evidenced through the *Positive for youth: a new approach to cross government policy for young people aged 13-19* (DfE, 2011). This policy document outlines the proposed measures to be implemented across nine government departments (Brooks, 2013; Davies, 2013). Davey (2010) found little consistency in how children's involvement in decision-making was monitored or recorded across the organisations in her study. Findings show that only 37% of organisations evaluated the impact of children's participation. Percy-Smith (2009) found that some young people were making changes and contributing to service commissioning and delivery while for other young

¹¹ 2015 was an election year and the Coalition government was disbanded and replaced by a majority Conservative government. The policy initiatives in this section were written during the time of the coalition and no subsequent changes have been noted since the Conservatives came to office.

people their contribution was not reflected in decision-making. Some young people had not been informed of the outcome at all.

Eighteen months after the implementation of *Positive for youth*, the Government produced a document entitled *Positive for Youth – Progress Since December 2011* (HM Government, 2013). In the forward to this report, MPs Edward Timpson (Minister for Children and Families) and Nick Hurd (Minister for the Civil Society), in commenting on the successes of the initiative, suggested:

“.....if we support young people and give them the appropriate tools, they can innovate, they can collaborate and they can have an impact.”

One of the main features in the *Positive for Youth* initiative is the realisation that all those engaged with young people should have a vested interest in the future of those young people and that young people themselves should have a valid contribution to informing decisions, shaping provision and inspecting quality (HM Government, 2013). Blades et al. (2013) reported examples of excellent practice where children were actively involved in identifying issues and making decisions about how to improve health services alongside adults. However this appears to be an exception to the rule and more often children are only involved in one aspect of the decision-making process which is frequently tokenistic as the decisions have already been made by adults (Blades et al., 2013). Byrne and Lundy (2013) reiterate this and suggest that when policy and other documents are made available in the public domain, children are often reliant on adults to make them aware of the existence of the documents and to ensure a child-friendly version is made available.

Reflecting these policy developments, during the 1980s and 1990s a critique of theorisation on children began to emerge globally, and children's rights and status were being debated in all areas of society including research (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2008; Tisdall and Punch, 2012). The 1990s saw increasing activity around children's rights globally (Hinton, 2008). Internationally, much has been learned about children's participation from community participation more broadly, influencing practice and learning (see for example Chambers (1994) cited in Hinton (2008)). In the UK, practitioners have relied on childhood studies literature to enable them to include children more in participatory activities (Hinton, 2008). This is evidenced from positive reports of children's participation in service delivery, design and evaluation (Moules and O'Brien, 2012; 2016) as well as in research about children and their lives. Globally there were two major international shifts altering the perception of childhood and consequently our view

of children in society (Noble-Carr, 2006): *The Children's Rights movement* discussed above and the *New Sociology of Childhood* discussed below.

The New Sociology of Childhood and Implications for Children's Voice research

Prior to the UNCRC (1989), and other developments, interest in viewing children as social actors with the ability to contribute to making sense of their own world, was already evident. For example, in 1974 Charlotte Hardman in the UK began to question children's agency (Hardman, 2001¹²). Likening children to women who occupied a 'muted' space in society, Hardman (2001) argued that certain theoretical approaches to children were more concerned with how adults understand children's behaviour. She was interested in developing an anthropological approach where adults could learn directly from children. Hardman (2001) used participant observation in the school playground and demonstrated the various ways the child's life unfolded during this playtime:

"My proposed approach regards children as people to be studied in their own right, and not just as receptacles of adult teaching." (Hardman, 2001:504).

James (2007) suggests Hardman's work led to a new way of theorising about children and childhood. Anthropologists in the US were already working directly with children, largely around broader issues of cultural transmission, but had nevertheless made children's everyday lives the focus of their observations and enquiries (James, 2007; Tisdall and Punch, 2012). Despite the US leading the way in involving children, the idea of exploring children's perspectives through hearing their voices came from Europe (James, 2007; Moran-Ellis, 2010; Tisdall and Punch, 2012). These initiatives combined to form the foundations of the new sociology of childhood.

The approach advocated ethnographic methodology and was firmly rooted in social constructionism¹³ (Noble-Carr, 2006; Moran-Ellis, 2010). This new way of conceptualising about children was supported by other professional and academic interests outside the sociological/anthropological field and a further branch of this new paradigm emerged known as 'childhood studies' (Tisdall and Punch, 2012). 'Childhood studies' is underpinned by its interdisciplinary approach and draws from sociology, anthropology, psychology, history, geography and law (James, 2007). The terms 'new sociology of childhood' and 'childhood studies' are used interchangeably in the literature. Within this new paradigm, adults are encouraged to listen to children's perspectives and

¹² This is a 2001 reference because the article was reprinted in this year.

¹³ The social constructionist approach is discussed in detail in chapter four – the methodology chapter.

recognise children as experts in their own lives (Langhout and Thomas, 2010; Graham, 2011) and includes their participation in the research process.

Through this paradigm shift and international and national policy developments, children in the UK are increasingly being recognised as social actors and not just beneficiaries of adult socialisation. One area where children are becoming more active and contributing to decision-making is through the research process but this is not without its challenges.

3.4 Children in research

The willingness of adult professionals to truly listen to children has underpinned the discourse around children's 'voice' (Kirby et al., 2003b; Komulainen, 2007; Kellett, 2010b). These discussions are usually focussed on adults questioning the competencies, age and maturity of the child as well as making assumptions about the credence of their statements (Komulainen, 2007; Davey, 2010; McNamee and Seymour, 2012). James (2007) cautions that providing voice to children is not necessarily about allowing them to speak, but it is about exploring the unique contribution to knowledge that children can offer to enable us [adults] to theorise and understand the social world that they occupy. This new paradigm, offers Alanen (2011), allows for the production of knowledge by childhood researchers through the process of listening to children, leading to improving the social standing of children in everyday life and making improvements to their well-being on a daily basis. Alanen (2011) posits that childhood studies can be viewed as critical social science "destined to make a difference in the world" (p.147). Such a stance recognises children as individuals by themselves alongside adults and not separate from them.

Likewise in the wider PAR literature, Kemmis (2008) considers how practitioners and those they work with can learn from each other. Kemmis (2008) suggests that the term 'practice' can be viewed in three ways; firstly as objective (observed from an outside perspective), secondly as subjective (how the persons involved see things) and thirdly dialectically (a merge of the subjective and objective). Kemmis (2008) stipulates that if practice is constructed collectively then it cannot be understood entirely from the viewpoint of those who are involved. Understanding should also be informed by those involved and affected by the practice. Therefore AR needs to incorporate the views of those carrying out the practice, those involved in it and those affected by it. Equally, Mannion, (2009:338) suggests that knowledge does not emerge from individuals during participatory practices but that this knowledge is generated through "intergenerational and interpersonal dialogues" where adults and children have negotiated the space

together. Mannion, (2009) proposes that children's negotiated space to participate cannot happen without the support of adults. Similarly, Bragg and Fielding (2005) in their educational research suggest, that if the involvement of students as researchers is to be productive and engaging, systems need to be put in place which enables dialogue, where adults and children can listen to and learn from each other. They suggest this is more than collaboration but it is about collegiality and changing our understanding of what it is to be a teacher and what it is to be a student. For children and adults then the relationship becomes interdependent and can begin to flourish as they each strive to understand and appreciate each other's unique roles (Fielding, 2004; Mannion, 2009).

Children can be involved in research in a number of ways as identified along a continuum by Bragg and Fielding (2005). On the left hand side of the continuum sits 'students as data sources' and 'students as active respondents' where data extracted or received from students informs teacher or other adult practice. To the right of the continuum sits 'students as co-researchers' and 'students as researchers'. In the former, Bragg and Fielding (2005) note that students work alongside their teachers exploring an issue identified by the teacher. Consequently the power imbalance begins to shift as students are granted more autonomy and are recognised as having valid viewpoints in the development of new knowledge. In the case of 'students as researchers', the power shift moves again and it is students who identify the area of enquiry and conduct the research with the support of adults (Bragg and Fielding, 2005). This model recognises that students and teachers are likely to think differently about particular issues and that even when they agree there may be differences in terms of importance or context (Fielding, 2004). Indeed children's perceptions being different to those of adults has been highlighted in other literature around the importance of children's voice (La Fontaine, 1991; James, 2007). 'Students as researchers' therefore involves children and adults working together and learning from each other and challenging the status quo of what is considered usual in the power dynamics between adult and child.

Kemmis (2008) suggests that opening up communicative spaces for self and collective reflection, so participants can work together to reach decisions about how to change or reform their practice, enables practitioners to consider the historical basis of their practices. It also encourages reflection on the current situation while developing a shared understanding of practice. He further stipulates that such collegiality enables practitioners to eradicate unjust or irrational ideas and viewpoints which have no merit in their work or which seek to hinder their work. How children are encouraged to participate then, whether in research or any other activity will be determined by how they are

regarded by adults as 'becomings' or 'beings' (Mannion, 2009). In practice it is less likely for children to participate alongside adults, rather participation is determined by power relations in terms of how adults invite children to participate with them (Mannion, 2009). Bragg and Fielding (2005) propose that the involvement of students as researchers should not be a one-off activity but should be embedded within schools so students can be viewed as resources and producers of knowledge and not passive recipients of knowledge. Involving students in research in this meaningful way enables them to contribute to developing their whole school and encourages them to question the status quo of their school. Fitzgerald et al. (2009) concur and emphasise that although children have been willing to participate through involvement in school councils, youth parliaments and other initiatives, this involvement is often autocratic and fails to meet the aims to which it was established. However, Fitzgerald et al. (2009) recognise that participation of children is not always straight forward as children to and fro between wanting to have a say and not wanting to have a say – much the same way adults do. Merely acknowledging that children have the right to participate and have their voices heard is not enough, of importance is providing opportunities for children to be heard. Participatory methodologies have been particularly appropriate for the study of childhood and Participatory Action Research (PAR) has proved popular in ascertaining children's views and involving them directly in the research process. O'Kane (2008:151) suggests that social researchers can:

“...play an important role in embracing the challenge to create space for children and young people to be listened to and heard, and I would advocate that the use of participatory techniques would facilitate such a task”

Of further importance is that the research is of particular interest to children; this provides them with a sense of ownership over the process and therefore they feel obligated to ensure the recommendations from the research are implemented (O'Brien, 2014). Fielding (2004) proposes that if students are only asked to participate in consultations and/or research where the agenda and questions have been set by teachers using language that they cannot relate to or the results of which do not relate to them, it is likely that students will feel alienated and patronised and therefore not want to participate in the research.

“Students and teachers need each other, need to work as active partners in the process if it is to be either worthwhile or successful.”(Fielding, 2004:307)

Accordingly children need to be invited to join the dialogue with adults and to negotiate how they would like to be involved and how adults can facilitate their participation (Fitzgerald et al., 2009; Mannion, 2009). The process of participatory research makes this methodology successful with children and includes a commitment to continuous

information sharing, reflection and action (O’Kane, 2008). Bland and Atweh (2007) found this to be the case in their work with a number of school student groups in Australia. They worked to identify the barriers preventing marginalised students from accessing third level education. Using a PAR approach they suggest that involving students as researchers can be one way to actively hear those voices which have potentially been muted due to traditional schooling systems. PAR, they argue, is intended to give ‘voice’ to all participants and improve the social outcomes. By working with the students in this way, Bland and Atweh (2007) argue, that the students were able to identify insider knowledge about issues including racism, and teacher attitudes which possibly would not be identified or reported to teachers. These findings therefore challenge school policies and procedures by identifying the problems faced by marginalised students by marginalised student researchers themselves. Most schools in this project reported improvements to their school policies based on this, and other insider knowledge obtained by the student researchers.

However, conducting childhood research is not without its challenges.

3.4.1 Challenges for childhood research

Conceptualising children’s role in the research process has shifted and more recently children are regarded as active researchers conducting their own research into areas relevant to their everyday lives as sole researchers (see Kellett et al., 2004), co-researchers (see Stoudt, 2009), and even commissioners of research (see O’Brien and Moules, 2013). Despite this shift in attitude towards children’s ability to actively participate in the construction of knowledge about the world around them, James (2007) argues that this does not truly ensure that children’s voices are heard. She proposes three ‘interlocking themes’ (p262), which are problematic for the practice of childhood research and raise a number of questions around the intention and purpose of the research:

Authenticity: Refers to how genuine the voice of the child is throughout the research process including dissemination of the findings. James (2007) suggests childhood researchers need to be more critical and question whether the voices presented in their work are insights based on actual perspectives children have of the social world and not confirmation of established prejudices. Certainly, Spyrou (2011) acknowledges that although childhood studies are underpinned by the notion of children’s voices, childhood researchers lack critique in scrutiny and representation.

How children are actively encouraged and enabled to participate in research has a number of critical and epistemological challenges highlighting questions around translation, interpretation and mediation (James, 2007). In other words, both Bragg and Fielding (2005) and James (2007) question the role of the child's voice in research and ask what their voice is being used to inform. Bragg and Fielding (2005) for example, suggest that teachers need to ensure that students are not merely proposing ideas for research which have been approved by their teachers; students should be providing new ideas which potentially challenge adult assumptions. Fitzgerald et al. (2009) concur and ask practitioners and researchers to consider what it is they wish to achieve through the involvement of children. They go on to say that adults must also be prepared to act on what comes from children's involvement based on the invitation children are sent to participate in dialogue with adults. By responding appropriately, adults send the message to children that they respect what children have to say and trust the knowledge they have about their social world and their ability to be reflexive. This was experienced by Bland and Atweh (2007) who noted that where adult coordinators imposed their own views, or did not allow for open discussion by steering the conversation away to 'safer' topics there was more likely to be a higher drop-out rate of student researchers. In this case, student researchers left the team and subsequently the project folded. Bland and Atweh (2007) suggest that because there was a lack of compromise between the co-ordinator and the student researchers there was no genuine commitment from the students to the project.

In the wider participation literature, Percy-Smith and Malone (2001) state there was little evidence to suggest that children's participation made a difference to learning or whether their involvement was sustained in the long run, while Davey (2010) found little consistency across organisations of how children's involvement in decision-making was monitored or recorded. Spyrou (2011:157) recognises the multiple layers apparent in children's voices and suggests that when researchers recognise this they can move beyond "the often misguided assumption" that voice research with children is a good thing which is valuable and of high quality. Spyrou (2011) suggests that when researchers enter a child's world to collect data too quickly and analyse the data by extracting children's quotes to illustrate findings, they can mock children, rather than offer any real insights to their world.

Conceptualisation of children's voices: Researchers need to be clear about how children's voices are conceptualised as all too often research findings position children as a homogenous group (James, 2007). This is problematic, as it does not consider multiple voices and therefore multiple childhoods. Woodhead and Faulkner (2008), in

questioning how the child's voice is authenticated in research, consider the interview transcripts collated through interviews with children, which are often analysed through the views, ideologies and assumptions of adults. Findings from this work, they argue, are used by other adults to enable them to make sense of children's experiences and other research interests, often based on other theories (set by other adults). Fitzgerald et al. (2009:302) propose that adults need to think critically about how they engage in dialogue with children and refer to the positioning of the "...listener/interpreter participatory practices that generate a deeper recognition of children." This invited dialogue also needs to recognise the views of a wider audience of children with multiple needs and various life experiences. Relying on the same methods and approaches to capture multiple views, as well as invoking generalised assumptions about children, is not conducive to understanding children as a wider group (Fitzgerald et al., 2009).

Certainly, Spyrou (2011) argues that researchers need to be more critical and reflexive about the processes generating children's voices. Although justifications have been provided for more creative methods as a means of accessing children's voices, problems around representation exist emphasising the limitations of children's voices (Spyrou, 2011). The literature shows that children are an under-estimated, under-used resource (Alderson, 2001), however children have access to a larger audience than adults, and children may be more likely to open up to their peers than to other adults (Moules and O'Brien, 2007). Alderson (2001) posits that when children produce research reports they attract more publicity and interest in the findings than much adult research. Problems in accessing, listening to and understanding the child's perspective of their own social world have been identified by researchers. Firstly, in actively involving children as co-researchers there is a danger that children will 'over-identify' with research participants and assume they understand more than they do (Alderson 2001:140). There is also the danger that they will take replies for granted and mislay their 'enquiring outsider' position (Alderson, 2001). Truth, however is a personal construct, so like anybody conducting research, children are likely to make assumptions, hold attitudes and stereotypes and take things at face value (Campbell and Berry, 2001; Kellett et al., 2004). Secondly, with children as research participants, there is a dilemma for researchers to know whether or not they are telling the truth or telling an imaginative tale to impress the researcher or even mislead them (Greene and Hill, 2005). The same statement can be made for adults. Children, Greene and Hill (2005) suggest, are able to lie from about the age of three years, which can be difficult for adults to tell whether they are lying by facial expression or behaviour. On the other hand children are able to provide reliable responses if questioned about events meaningful to them (Kellett et al., 2004).

Questioning the nature of children's participation in the research process: Within this paradigm shift, children are regarded as active researchers rather than objects of research. In this progressed relationship, power differentials are apparent between the adult researcher and the child researcher. Adult researchers need to be transparent about how this is explored and understood in the research project (James, 2007; Mannion, 2009). In a traditional research context the adult holds the power as the 'expert' on what to research about children, how the data is collected and indeed how it is interpreted (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2008). Child research therefore, has traditionally been framed around professional, policy or academic agendas but rarely from the agenda of the child. Although this approach is changing, most research is initiated by adults (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2008).

If children are to be seen as social actors they need to be seen as capable of social action thus the areas where children can be socially active need to be identified and adults need to view themselves as being in an equal relationship with children rather than one determined by power relations (Fielding 2004; Hendrick, 2008). However a prominent theme in the discussion on children's rights is the tension between what the child wants and what the adult wants for the child (Roche 2004; Peters and Johansson, 2012; Tisdall and Punch, 2012). Spyrou (2011) proposes that building trusting relationships with children reduces power differentials and takes time. In reality this time is not always available and can impact on the rapport between children and adult researchers (Spyrou, 2011). This in turn can have a negative effect on accessing deeper meanings children associate with the phenomena under study, which although not necessarily more authentic or true, could present different or more complex understandings around children's views. In their study involving young people as co-researchers, O'Brien and Moules (2007), found that using the cycles of action and reflection at all stages of the project, even in an informal manner, enabled the young researchers to actively participate in decision-making. This helped challenge some underlying power issues between adults and children.

For 'voice' research to be successful, researchers need to use appropriate techniques that do not exclude or patronise children (Kellett et al., 2004). Hinton (2008) suggests that UK researchers are particularly concerned with issues of reliability and validity of the data collected by and from children. In the case of qualitative research this quality is assessed through the 'trustworthiness' of the research. One way to ensure childhood research is truly child centred and focussed on what children are telling us from their

perspective is in the evaluation of the process. This in turn adds to the trustworthiness of the study.

In the final part of this section on children in research, I discuss the importance of evaluating the research process drawing briefly on the wider participation literature. The section ends with recognising a newer model for evaluating children's participation in research – the Dual-axis Model of Participation (DMP) (Moules and O'Brien, 2012).

3.4.2 Evaluating participation in childhood research

To 'participate' is to play an active role in decision-making and the outcomes (Thomas, 2012). However children's participation must be their choice and adults need to respect the wishes of children who choose not to participate (Sinclair, 2004). Thomas (2012) stresses that if participation is to be meaningful to children then adults need to invest time, energy and commitment. He also concludes that building relationships with children and providing them with information they understand as well as encouraging them to speak up about 'small' and 'big' matters added to the quality of the participation they experienced.

For the purposes of this thesis, I am taking the view of participation held by Moules (2005) where participation is about finding ways of incorporating the views of all children and young people in decision-making processes within the context of what is possible both institutionally and culturally. Children's 'participation' and what this means is interpreted in many ways, usually by the adults who are supporting them (Kirby et al., 2003b; Moules and O'Brien 2007; 2012). Consequently, children's participation can run the risk of being implemented in a meaningless way or not at all (Sinclair, 2004). Percy-Smith and Malone (2001) argue that participatory opportunities should be *inclusive* where changes are made within the system to accommodate the participation of children rather than *integrated* which, they argue, expect children to participate in predefined ways and structures (*italics in original text*).

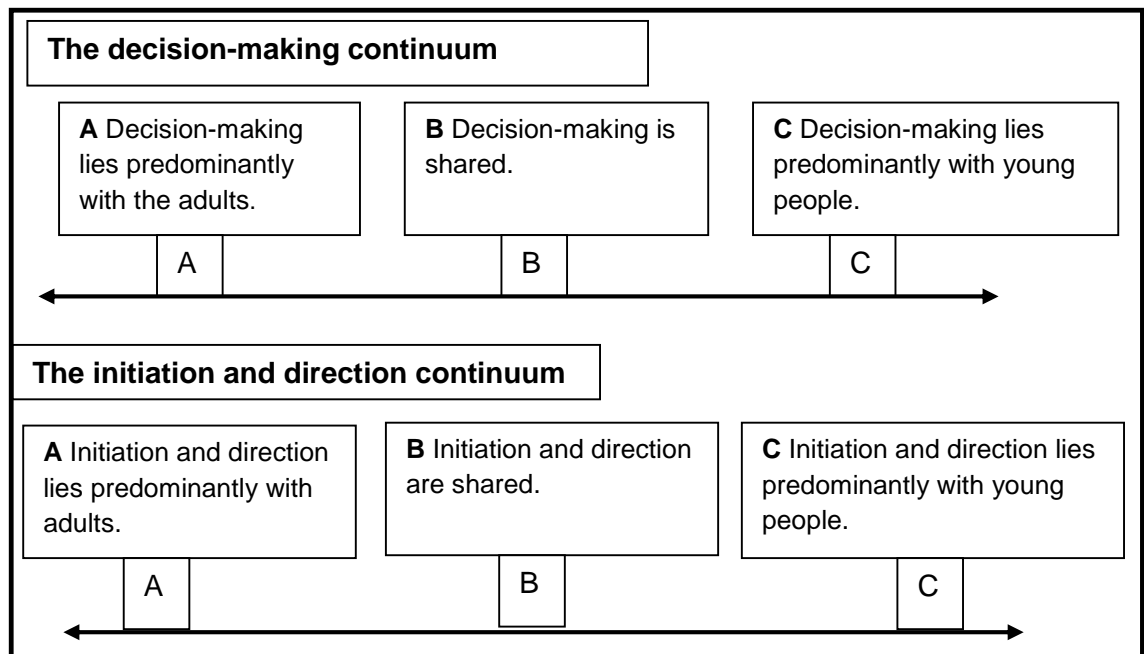
Now that children are provided with more opportunities to influence change it is paramount that participation is not viewed as an add-on activity but rather embedded in practice (Sinclair, 2004). Percy-Smith and Malone (2001) note that evaluating children's participation is not about testing to see if it was done correctly or if milestones were reached but more about critically reflecting on the process and learning from it. In this way children's participation becomes achievable (Percy-Smith and Malone, 2001). The

Dual-axis Model of Participation (DMP) has been used to evaluate participation in the research process and is discussed below.

The Dual-axis Model of Participation

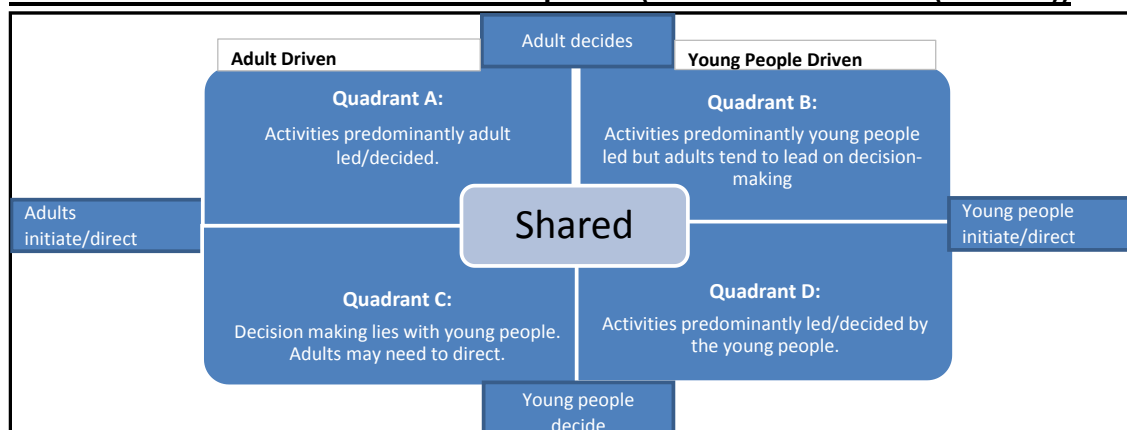
The DMP is a framework used to plot participation throughout the stages of a project and offers a way of analysing the different ways that participation can be seen to be happening. The Framework reflects the vibrant, ever changing nature of participation. The DMP (Moules and O'Brien, 2012) focuses on two dimensions of participation: '*decision-making*' and '*initiation and direction*'. As a project evolves the balance of each is either with the child researchers or the adult researchers. These dimensions of participation are placed along a continuum as described in FIGURE 3.1 below. The first continuum recognises '*decision-making*'; at one end (point A) adults make all the decisions and at the other end (point B) children make all the decisions but in the middle (point C) decisions are shared. The second dimension recognises '*initiation and direction*' with adults taking the lead at point A and children taking the lead at point B. In the middle initiation and direction are shared between adults and children (point C).

FIGURE 3.1: Two dimensions of participation (Moules and O'Brien (2012:20))



"Where the two continuums are joined at right angles at point B four possible types of participation are revealed" (Moules and O'Brien, 2012:20).

FIGURE 3.2: Dual-axis Model of Participation (Moules and O'Brien (2012:20))



The DMP starts from the premise that participation is already happening. Children and adults can use the model to achieve the aims of the project as it is evolving. This concurs with Sinclair (2004) and Davey (2010) who argue the need for projects to evaluate children's participation so lessons can be learnt about meaningful ways of conducting participatory processes. Unlike other participatory models, the DMP offers a framework of four different types of participation, which can be happening together and independently to each other (Moules and O'Brien, 2012). Moreover this model allows adult and child researchers to see their collective and individual views on the participatory process enabling discussion and reflection throughout the project. This commitment to on-going information sharing, reflection and action is central to participatory research (Winter and Munn-Giddings, 2001; O'Kane, 2008).

The DMP was developed by Tina Moules as part of her PhD study in 2006 (Moules, 2006) and later used to evaluate another project with myself. Both research projects involved children as co-researchers to varying degrees. The levels of initiation and direction were consequently determined by the adult researchers once the two projects ended so in this doctoral study the framework was used with children to determine if differing views were generated about the levels of participation and power sharing in a research project¹⁴.

3.5 Chapter summary

This chapter supports the discourse that *children* are social actors and informants in their own lives while *childhood* is a structural feature of all societies and the early phase in the life course of all people in all societies representing the process of maturation to adulthood.

¹⁴ Please see chapter 5, section 5.4 and chapter 8, section 8.4 for a detailed discussion on the participation evaluations for this study.

The UK has witnessed a paradigm shift in terms of how 'children' and indeed 'childhood' are conceptualised in policy, practice and research. The voice of the child is recognised as paramount in all developments about them and in this chapter I have discussed how children can be more active in the research process when they are invited and supported by adults to play an active role in exploring issues of importance to children themselves. I have also recognised the challenges faced by childhood researchers. This chapter has ended with a brief introduction to the DMP, a tool used to evaluate children's participation in research and which was the starting point in evaluating the participation of the young researchers in this doctoral study.

Having presented the contextual, policy and theoretical underpinnings of this study in chapters one, two and three, the aim of the study was to explore bullying in a single private day and boarding school. A PAR framework embedded in the philosophy of social constructionism was used to add to the knowledge in this field.

Chapter four presents the methodological foundations of the study before the PAR process is presented in chapter five.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the methodological foundations for the study as well as the ethics and value base underpinning this work.

I begin this chapter by presenting the research questions for cycle one. I then discuss how the study is positioned from a social constructionist viewpoint. The ethics and value base specific to this study conclude this chapter.

4.2 Research Questions and Aims

This study set out to answer the following question:

- **What do young people in this private day and boarding school view as the core issue of bullying in the school and how do they want to address this?**

The study was originally designed to be carried out in two cycles and therefore had two distinct sets of research questions. As the process evolved a third cycle emerged¹⁵. The first two cycles are where the methodological and subject contributions to knowledge rest and so provide the focus for this thesis. Cycle one questions were predetermined by me:

- **What are the views of students, school staff and parents/carers in relation to the bullying definition set by the school?**
- **What are the views of students, school staff and parents/carers in relation to how satisfied they are with the way in which the school deals with bullying incidents?**
- **What bullying issue do the young researchers want to research?**

Kidd and Kral (2005) consider the action emphasis in PAR focusses less on research questions and more on the problem to be solved. In other words the questions are not leading the study but the area of inquiry and the process is explored to ascertain whether the inquiry will inform action. Therefore the project can begin with a number of research questions and as the project evolves these questions become less critical only to be replaced by newer ones. Exploring these questions is considered to be the research component of PAR (Kidd and Kral, 2005). Through using this approach, cycle one of this project was exploratory to determine what it was that the young researchers wanted to investigate. Cycle two questions were decided by the research team through the gathering and analysing of cycle one data, as well as the participatory process and these questions are discussed in chapter eight.

¹⁵ Please see chapter 10 section 10.5 for more details on cycle three.

To achieve the aim and answer the research questions the following process objectives were set, to be achieved over the two cycles of fieldwork:

1. Identify a private day and boarding school where students and staff wish to take part in the project (cycle one).
2. Recruit and train a core group of young people (young researchers¹⁶) who would like to be involved in the research project (cycle one and two), in research methods.
3. Consider, along with the young researchers, how students, parents/carers and school staff view the school's bullying definition, through a series of data collection activities decided by the group (cycle one).
4. Consider how satisfied the school students, staff and parents/carers are with how bullying is managed within the school through a series of data collection activities decided by the group (cycle one).
5. Identify with the young researchers, a bullying issue they would like to further explore (cycle two).

4.3 Philosophical assumptions in social research

Within social research two broad paradigms exist for conducting research activity; these are usually referred to as positivism and interpretivism. This section highlights the opposing views of these two paradigms but also argues for a third paradigm – *critical research*, in which this doctoral thesis is positioned.

Positivism underpins the use of scientific quantitative methodology to explore the social world (Mark, 1996). Positivists consider that research is value free. The researchers remove themselves from the research to reduce contamination and reports are generally written in the third person to reduce bias in the claim for objectivity (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011). This is a reductionist approach to the social world where all social phenomena are reduced to specific criteria and only a limited set of pre-defined variables are studied. Such an approach is limited in studies of the social world because “people, unlike particles, think.” (Moses and Knutsen, 2007:146). I do not reject the positivist approach, which has provided extensive knowledge in the field of medicine, psychology and the wider natural sciences, but my thinking is similar to that of Morgan and Smircich (1980) who state:

¹⁶ McLaughlin (2006), in his article debating the benefits and costs of involving young service users in research, uses the term ‘young researchers’ to describe the young people who are ‘co-researchers’ and the adults as the ‘adult researchers’. The term ‘young researchers’ sits comfortably with me so this is the terminology I use when referring to the students recruited and trained to carry out the research work with me.

“Once one relaxes the ontological assumption that the world is a concrete structure, and admits that human beings, far from merely responding to the social world, may actively contribute to its creation, the dominant methods become increasingly unsatisfactory, and indeed, inappropriate.” (p.498)

Interpretivism on the other hand underpins qualitative methodology, which is concerned with investigating the social world rather than focussing specifically on experimental results (Trafford, 2001). Researchers consequently try to understand the meaning of personal and group experiences (Hall and Hall, 1996). This approach is inductive; rather than contributing to or developing a theory, which has been proved or disproved by the research process, researchers explore the social world, and through this process develop a theory, which is consistent with what they observe.

Webb (1989) considers the limitations of both paradigms. *Positivism*, has met with opposition due to its claim about objectivity and the belief that quantitative methods can be used to measure subjective phenomena such as anxiety or pain. *Interpretivism*, while considered subjective with emphasis on interpersonal relationships and communication, is not considerate of the structural features of society constraining our lives (Webb, 1989). From these confines a third paradigm of social research has emerged – *critical research* – emphasising that research does not have to be cryptic and carried out only by researchers but should include the people being studied in all aspects of the process (Webb, 1989). Under the umbrella of critical research sit both ‘Action Research’ (AR) and ‘Participatory Action Research’ (PAR). Both approaches are intrinsically multi-disciplinary and rarely fit comfortably into the realms of one particular discipline (Herr and Anderson, 2005).

4.3.1 Origins of AR and PAR methodology¹⁷

Kurt Lewin is referred to as the founder of AR, and his work was concerned with social complications and problems of discrimination and minority and majority relations (Bargal, 2006). He focussed his work on group participatory approaches to address conflict, crises, and change, usually within organisations (O’Brien, 1998). In an attempt to find solutions, as well as contribute to developing an intervention theory, Lewin began to conceptualise AR methodology (Bargal, 2006). Lewin introduced the term ‘action research’ in his 1946 seminal paper *Action Research and Minority Problems*:

¹⁷ ‘Action Research’ and ‘Participatory Action Research’ are among the most common terms used to describe the action approaches. These terms are used interchangeably in the literature (with no discussion around similarities or differences), I am defining my project as using a PAR framework but when referencing authors who use other terms I will use the terms they use.

“It is a type of action-research, a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action and research leading to social action. Research that produces nothing but books will not suffice” (Lewin, 1946:35)

Lewin (1946:38) identified a framework for AR, which he stated involves “a spiral of steps” involving planning, acting, observing and reflecting. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) elaborated on this cyclical process viewing it as a *series* of cycles involving planning, acting, observing and reflecting resulting in a revised plan of action. These small cycles, Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) suggest, help to outline the issues, ideas and assumptions in a clearer way so that the research team involved can define more pertinent questions as the process advances.

Herr and Anderson (2005) suggest that AR has grown from many different disciplines and research traditions and will thus evidence itself differently within the various disciplines of study. While AR shares some similarities with quantitative and qualitative approaches, it sets itself aside from the two traditions because it actively involves research participants in the research through them either having direct control over the process or being involved in aspects of it (Herr and Anderson, 2005). Additionally, unlike the positivist approach the phenomenon under study does not remain constant during the research process (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011).

By the mid-1970s, the field of AR had evolved. Organisational development using AR had been developed by Lewin and successors such as Eric Trist (O’Brien, 1998) and AR spread into further areas of study. Munn-Giddings and Seeborn (2010) point these out as follows:

- Education (e.g. Freire, 1972; Elliott, 1991)
- Community Development (Fals-Borda, 1991)
- Health (Tichen, 2000; Meyer, 1993)
- Social Care (Winter and Munn-Giddings, 2001; Hart and Bond, 1995)

Rory O’Brien (1998) in *An Overview of the Methodological Approaches of Action Research* published online states:

“Action research is known by many other names, including participatory research, collaborative inquiry, emancipatory research, action learning, and contextural action research, but all are variations on a theme. Put simply, action research is “learning by doing””

In discussing the ethical and epistemological understandings of involving young people in PAR, Chabot et al. (2012), suggest that PAR has been referred to as ‘*Action Research*’ and ‘*Community-based Participatory Research*’. They argue that despite the variety of

'action approaches' in existence, all hold a "commitment to general goals and assumptions" (Chabot et al. 2012:424). Jones (2004) refers to this collective range of emancipatory, participatory and developmental research approaches as *Social Action Research*, and suggests:

"The political struggle for recognition, representation and equality is the common thread that runs through these forms of research which are linked to issues of oppression and marginalisation" (Jones, 2004:114).

Participatory Action Research

PAR emerged in the 1960s and one of the major advocates for this approach was Paulo Freire who conducted research **with** people rather than **on** people so they could make changes in their own lives (Koch and Kralik, 2006). In his work with illiterate children, Freire advocated for changes in educational programmes to be based on "actual experiences of students and on continual shared investigation" (Koch and Kralik, 2006:13). Veale, (2005) argues that a main purpose of PAR is the generation of knowledge through academic and local expertise to provide oppressed people with the tools they need to make changes in their lives. However 'oppressed' may not fully encapsulate PAR as identified by Stoudt (2009). He recognises that PAR has also been used as a framework to explore privilege. In his study exploring bullying in a private school for boys using a PAR framework, Stoudt (2009) refers to the seminal work of Lewin (1946) where Lewin reflected that it is similarly important for the social sciences to engage with structural privilege. In the closing remarks of their book *The Sage Handbook of Action Research Participative Inquiry and Practice* (2008) Reason and Bradbury wrote a short section entitled *Pedagogy of the oppressed and pedagogy of the privileged*. These authors propose that although oppression and privilege are opposing experiences there is a need for both sets of work:

"The pedagogy of the oppressed must be matched by a pedagogy of the privileged if we are to move our world toward justice and sustainability" (p.700).

Stoudt (2009:10) goes onto say that Reason and Bradbury (2008), like Lewin, advocate for a "pedagogy of the privileged" to include:

"...inquiry processes which engage those in positions of power, and those who are simply members of privileged groups—based on gender, class, profession, or nation."

As this doctoral study is located in a private day and boarding school it is important to recognise the perceived privilege the students come from but it is equally important to recognise that because they are young people, they are in fact 'oppressed' in terms of having their views heard on a wider societal level.

AR is predominantly defined by the research design involving three recurring stages: inquiry, action and reflection (MacKenzie et al., 2012). Through several cycles of these stages, improvements are made to the knowledge and understanding of those involved in the process leading to social action. Furthermore, reflection on social action leads to new understanding and opens up more possibilities for inquiry (MacKenzie et al., 2012). AR, they argue, becomes PAR conditional on who is involved at each stage and to what extent (MacKenzie et al., 2012). At the most participatory, researchers work with participants as co-researchers in that they collaborate in the design, data collection, analysis, dissemination of findings and most critically in reviewing and evaluating the process as a whole (MacKenzie et al., 2012). In PAR many changes take place by virtue of this co-researcher/researcher relationship to bring about desired changes (Ozanne and Saatcioglu, 2008). Reason and Bradbury (2001:1) define PAR as:

“...a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes”.

Although PAR spans both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research it is best suited to the philosophy of the qualitative paradigm (Kidd and Kral, 2005). This is because the critical and real-world knowledge developed through the use of PAR originates from understanding the meaning associated with the data (Kidd and Kral, 2005). To this end, it does not mean that quantitative methods are refuted but:

“It is important to keep in mind that PAR is neither antimethod nor antipositivism. It is a continuing conversation.” (Kidd and Kral, 2005:190)

Since inception, the action approaches have met with criticism from the scientific community being labeled as unscientific and not worthy of the term ‘research’ but more as a process of personal/professional development (Meyer, 1993). Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001) advise that there is no prescriptive way of doing AR (or PAR) as the needs of each organisation, workplace, service user group and so on, are so unique and individualised to that group that what constitutes research ‘evidence’ is still being debated (Herr and Anderson, 2008). McNiff (1988) argues that through the process of practitioners becoming more critical and reflective, as well as being open to improvements and change in practice, they start to develop theories and justifications for their work, which in turn provides them with justifications to make their claim to professional knowledge public.

A PAR framework is used in this doctoral study because it allowed for the full involvement of students of the school in the design, data collection, analysis, dissemination of findings and most critically in reviewing and evaluating the process as a whole (MacKenzie et al., 2012). It also enabled relationships to develop between adults and young researchers in

the sharing and generation of new knowledge. Underpinned by this PAR framework is the ethos of social constructionism, which is concerned with the process of how knowledge is generated through relationships with one another (Burr, 1995; Gergen and Gergen, 2008). Social constructionism is concerned with the context of the research in order to understand the historical underpinnings and cultural setting of the participants (Creswell, 2007). To understand the many positions research team members would be coming from, social constructionism was a viable option for this project because it allowed us all to position ourselves within the study and to acknowledge our own backgrounds and cultures and how they would potentially impact our interpretations of the research findings.

4.3.2 PAR and Social Constructionism

Gergen and Gergen (2008:160) suggest that with PAR and social constructionism:

“...there is a vital and significant kinship across these domains”

Burr (1995), in discussing a definition of social constructionism, suggests that there is no one description of the approach but that writers in the field share a number of similarities much like family traits. The social constructionist approach is any approach with foundation in one or more of the following:

1. A critical position towards taken-for-granted knowledge
2. Historical and cultural specificity
3. Knowledge is sustained by social processes
4. Knowledge and social action go together

(Burr, 1995)

Social constructionism recognises that knowledge is formed through human relationships rather than individuals alone (Burr, 1995; Gergen and Gergen, 2008). This approach suggests that knowledge is not something that someone has, or does not have, but rather it is something that people construct together (Burr, 1995). Social constructionism rejects the idea that researchers can remove themselves from the process of knowledge production and rejects the viewpoint that there is “an objective truth waiting to be discovered” (King and Horrocks, 2010:22). Knowledge is therefore generated through social exchanges. Social constructionism is historically and culturally located and a similar study carried out in a different location could produce different findings (King and Horrocks, 2010). Action researchers expand on this notion in three ways as explained by Gergen and Gergen (2008):

1. Researchers do not work separately from research participants but work with them in a collaborative way.

2. There is no separation of communities between the 'professional researcher' and the communities being studied.
3. Sharing of knowledge is actively encouraged between all members of the research team, that is, the professional researcher and the co-researchers.

Language and how it is used in human relationships is a concern of social constructionists (Burr, 2003; Gergen and Gergen, 2008). Within social constructionism, language is theorised as being productive. In other words the language we use has the ability to construct different versions of reality (King and Horrocks, 2010). As such, social constructionism clashes with positivism where the belief stands that one 'true' knowledge can be accessed through observation (King and Horrocks, 2010). Kellett (2011:4) describes constructionism as:

“...an epistemological position that assumes reality is socially constructed – the emphasis is on knowledgeS rather than knowledge.”

This approach thus assumes subjectivity is integral to the research process and that multiple perspectives are assumed. Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001) recognise this principle in AR as the need for the researcher to be 'reflexive'. This principle asks that researchers truly reflect on the judgements we make in research. These are not final but open to scrutiny through working collaboratively with co-researchers. Previously, 'traditional' researchers devalued the experiences of research participants arguing that due to their distance from them, they themselves are better equipped to interpret these experiences (Beresford, 2006). However, Beresford (2006) suggests that the shorter the distance between direct experience and interpretation, the less distorted and inaccurate the resulting knowledge is likely to be.

4.4 Ethics and Value Base of the study

Having highlighted the philosophical underpinnings of the study this section centres on the ethics and value base, which shaped the project direction¹⁸ in the following ways:

4.4.1 The study focuses on the co-construction of knowledge through human relationships and collaboration

Like social constructionists, participatory action researchers believe that social reality is historically constructed, whereby previous historical interests act as drivers for current social practices (Ozanne and Saatcioglu, 2008; McNiff and Whitehead, 2011). Subsequently, society should be critiqued and changed on the basis of more-inclusive

¹⁸ The specific ethical considerations pertinent to the study are discussed in chapter 5, section 5.3 (cycle one) and chapter 8, section 8.3 (cycle two).

interests acknowledging history, reflection and promoting change (Murray and Ozanne, 2006; McNiff and Whitehead, 2011). McNiff and Whitehead (2011:29) reflect:

“...action researchers always see themselves in relation with others...”

both in terms of their practice and their ideas. They suggest that our ideas begin as somebody else's, but how we go about transforming them makes them unique and our own (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011). Therefore PAR cannot be carried out in a value-free way because the researchers acknowledge their own values as part of the process (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011).

4.4.2: The study welcomes and embraces the worldviews of each member of the research team in shaping and guiding the project

Traditional research has not viewed children as research informants in their own right; rather their world has been investigated from adult perspectives with adults choosing what is investigated (see chapter three for a full discussion). Within this approach there is a tendency for researchers, and others, to perceive children as incompetent and incapable of understanding the research process (Christensen and Prout, 2002); thus when the voices of young people are absent from research about them the research is incomplete (Jones, 2004). The image of children as incompetent and in need of protection denies them access to knowledge and power that in turn increases their vulnerability (Christensen and Prout, 2002). PAR challenges this.

Rodríguez and Brown, (2009) consider the importance of student voice research and how PAR has helped in their work to ensure young people have a say in policy initiatives at school. They purport that first and foremost the topic under investigation must be relevant to the young people involved in terms of their learning and the knowledge produced which must address real life problems. Young people cannot be viewed as 'data sources' but as whole human-beings actively engaged in the process of learning and inquiring to help improve the quality of their own lives (Rodríguez and Brown, 2009).

4.4.3 The study acknowledges that meanings associated with bullying are varied and multiple

Social constructionists challenge taken-for-granted knowledge about a social phenomenon (Gergen, 1985). In the case of this doctoral study a core phenomenon is bullying. Drawing on previous research, Cuadrado-Gordillo (2012) focuses on different perceptions of bullying between parents and teachers as being significantly different to the perceptions of students. She considers that teachers' views are influenced not only

by the training they receive but also by their own experiences of bullying and the roles they themselves possibly played in the past. Parents could be influenced by the same factors as teachers but also by the roles their child plays in the bullying incident. As a result of their social position in school, students are usually the most affected by bullying. Through gathering the varied perceptions, of adults and children, the possibility is opened for understanding alternative viewpoints on bullying (Cuadrado-Gordillo, 2012)

4.4.4 The study acknowledges that meanings associated with participation are varied and multiple

Similar to the work of Fox (2013) this research did not perceive participation as a method or tool but rather as a methodological value base where positivist assumptions would not complement the work. What sets PAR aside from the positivist traditions is the viewpoint that research participants possess expert knowledge through their engagement in the research. PAR in turn takes the position of interpretivists a step further by fully engaging participants in the research process as co-researchers (Rodríguez and Brown, 2009). Akin to the work of Fox (2013) I needed to acknowledge from the outset that meaningful forms of participatory inquiry with young people can be difficult to achieve so I took the advice of McIntyre (2008) who explains the importance of developing a consensus of what the group understands 'participation' to mean. Richardson (1983) asserts that participation is not equal with the process of decision-making but it is the taking part and the various degrees to which this happens that is important. It can be viewed then that participation can be occurring even when young people are not the ones making the decisions (Moules and O'Brien, 2012).

4.4.5 The study recognises a number of power imbalances

While an imbalance of power between pupils and teachers is inescapable in schools, they can be places where power can be challenged and where rights and responsibilities can be encouraged and understood through active participation (Haydon, 1997). In the context of research, Jones (2004) states;

“.....this is a power inequality that cannot be levelled out through superficial attempts at egalitarianism” (p.113).

In a research context, Jones (2004) suggests egalitarianism refers to giving equal weight to the contributions of all members of the research team. However Jones (2004) argues that traditionally the rights of children and young people are presented through an adult perspective which questions whether democratisation in research is possible and whether young researchers actually gain from being involved.

Power in PAR and other participatory research projects has been challenged in the literature. Power can be viewed in a negative or positive way according to Hill et al. (2004). Negatively, power is the ability to control others or being controlled by them so in research the adult researcher has more power than the young researchers. Johnson (1996) suggests that power can only be gained by taking it from another, so adults would need to relent some of their power. From a positive perspective, power is about having the ability or capacity to act (O'Brien and Moules, 2007). Power becomes a variable and the model of no winners or losers recedes. According to Martin (1996:89)

“...power in research is not simply concentrated in either the researcher or the researched”.

Instead, it is active and fluid, a moving force. In research terms, power is exercised in a vertical direction from the top down (researcher over researched) but also from the bottom up. Consequently, power derives not only from the position of the adult over the child but also vice versa (O'Brien and Moules, 2007). Thus, in the research process:

“Power moves between different actors and different social positions, it is produced and negotiated in the social interactions of child to adult, child to child and adult to adult in the local settings of the research.” (Christensen, 2004:175).

4.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have discussed the philosophical and methodological underpinnings of this study. I have presented the research questions for cycle one as well as the overall aims and objectives of the study. I have argued that a PAR framework rooted in the philosophy of social constructionism is a valid approach for this project because it allows for the active involvement of the students of the school in the research process and encourages them to be as involved as they choose to be. Furthermore this approach was appropriate because the aim was to focus on what the young people themselves wanted to research about bullying. A PAR framework would encourage the research team to reflect on the process as it was evolving and allow us to question if our approach could lead to action. Social constructionism would allow us to construct meaning together and to take on board the views of all members of the research team and the wider participant group.

Chapter five discusses the research design and process, the ethical considerations and the participatory activities and evaluations specific to cycle one. Chapter six concludes cycle one with a presentation of the research findings and a discussion of these findings with the relevant literature.

Cycle one: Defining bullying and assessing satisfaction

Chapter 5: Research Design and Process (cycle one)

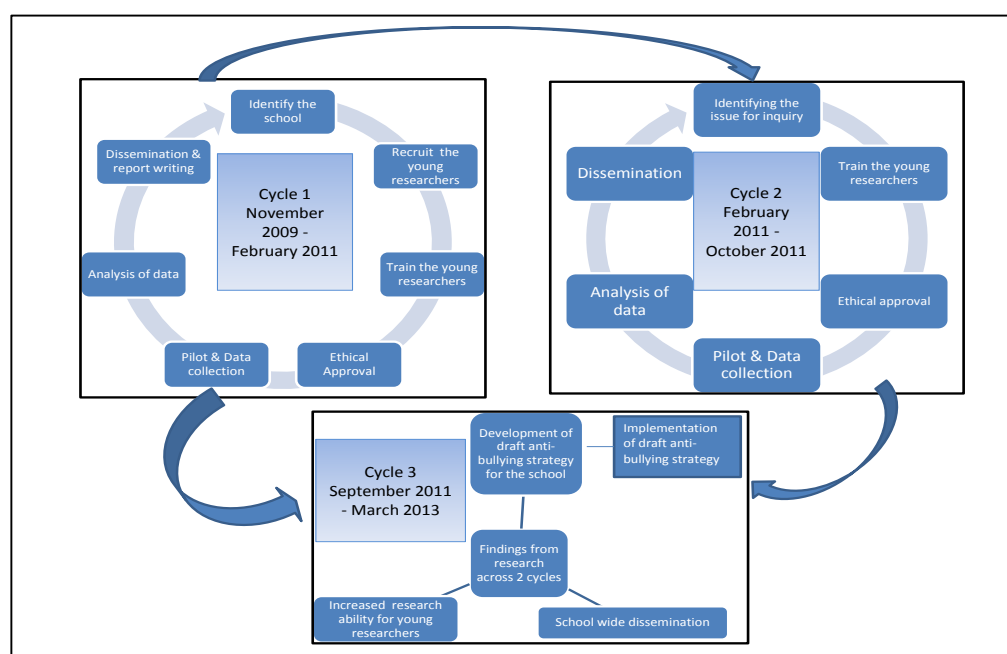
5.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have provided the rationale and the methodological underpinnings for the study. This chapter details how objectives one to four of the project were achieved¹⁹. The chapter is divided into two parts; firstly I present the research design specific to cycle one by focussing on each step of the process from recruiting the research team right through to dissemination. The ethical principles for this project are then discussed. The second part of the chapter presents two participation evaluations conducted during this first cycle. These evaluations led to the refinement of an evaluation tool used to evaluate the research process.

It is worth noting from the outset that to meet the objectives, the research would take place over two cycles. The two cycles are detailed in this chapter and chapter eight, but as the process developed a third cycle emerged²⁰ (see FIGURE 5.1). The first two cycles are where the methodological and subject contributions to knowledge rest and so provide the focus for this thesis.

5.2 Research Design and Process in cycle one

FIGURE 5.1: Research design and process model



¹⁹ Please see chapter 4, section 4.2 for the objectives of this study.

²⁰ Please see chapter 10 section 10.5 for a full discussion of cycle three.

5.2.1 Identifying the school

The literature showed little bullying research in the field of private day and boarding schools²¹. I made contact with the vice-principal of a local private day and boarding school who expressed interest in the work I was proposing and we spoke about the current student support group in the school (*Blossom*). This group composed of sixth form pupils dedicated to hearing the student voice and helping with the student experience. After a conversation on how we should proceed we agreed that it would be a good starting point to arrange a meeting with *Blossom* to pitch the research to them and seek their advice on the project. This meeting proved useful and contributed to designing the recruitment literature leading to the recruitment of six students to the research team, three boys and three girls from year eight to year ten.

Within this doctoral study the research team carried out the collaborative work but we also had an advisory group who helped to advise and shape the project. This group included the vice principal, representatives from *Blossom* and school prefects and meetings took place six times over the life of the project. Advisory group meetings focussed on progression and advice on how best to recruit students, staff and parents to the project as well as dissemination ideas. Herr and Anderson (2005) propose that the best way to carry out AR is in collaboration with other people who have a stake in the research problem. The advisory group was fully committed to investigating bullying at the school, to hearing the student voice and to leaving a legacy behind.

5.2.2 Recruiting and training young researchers

Following the meeting with *Blossom*, I introduced the study to the rest of the students through a presentation at the school assembly during anti-bullying week in November 2009. I explained to the students why I would like their help in running this project. The research team was recruited in January 2010 and after much debate named themselves *Research for you (R4U)* with the caption: “*Researching for Life without fear*”. The research team was thus formed and comprised R4U (young researchers) and myself (adult researcher).

These self-selecting students were recruited to the project in two intakes but membership was fluid and the students could decide how involved they wanted to be at any one time. The young researchers also had the opportunity to leave the project whenever they wanted to. As we met during the school day (lunchtime) and mainly during term time it was important that the young researchers were able to leave the group for periods at a

²¹ Please see chapter 2 section 2.5 for more discussion

time to concentrate on other activities that they were involved with such as music and sports. This ethos reflects the values and ethics base of the study that perceptions of participation are varied and multiple.²² The young researchers were free to participate in the project in whatever way they wanted to and I as the adult researcher and the rest of the research team acknowledged their contribution. TABLE 5.1 below shows the members of R4U in January 2010.

TABLE 5.1: R4U members January 2010

Name ²³	Year	Boarder or day student
Hanik	10	Boarder
Taha	10	Day Student
Patrick	9	Day Student
Shirley	8	Day Student
Sarah	9	Day Student
Jenny	8	Day Student

Students wanted to be involved in the project from the outset because:

“The research will get a better response rate when young people are involved” (Taha)

“Because we are closer to the students here they are more likely to tell us the truth than tell adults” (Patrick)

During cycle one the three girls left the project for various reasons unconnected to the project, and the boys continued. The boys decided that recruiting more members would be beneficial so they presented their work to the school community in October 2010 (new school term) and asked for volunteers to join them in their work. I presented to the heads of year and appealed to them to promote our work to their students. From these presentations two more girls joined the team. R4U membership at this time is reflected in TABLE 5.2.

TABLE 5.2: R4U members October 2010

Name	Year	Boarder or day student
Hanik	11	Boarder
Taha	11	Day Student
Patrick	10	Day Student
Amy	9	Boarder
Debbie (pseudonym)	9	Boarder

²² Please see chapter 4, section 4.4.4 for more details.

²³ The three girls left the project before the end of cycle one so their names have been changed to pseudonyms. Those who remained in the project chose to keep their full name in the final write up of the research.

Debbie left the project after the data was collected due to other commitments but Amy, remained on the team:

“The head of boarding at [boarding house] told me about some bullying research that was going on. I thought it would be something I would be interested in so I came along to a meeting. I’ve stayed involved because it’s interesting and I’m always talking to people about their problems and this could help me help others” (Amy)

Hope, a day student and participant in the focus group in December (2010) joined the team in January 2011:

“I came to the Focus Group and I liked it so I kept coming again. I think it’s fun and I like it” (Hope)

Once recruited, R4U were trained in research skills relevant to this project and decided how frequently we met as a research group.

I recognised from the outset that the students required training to conduct this work and it was my responsibility to ensure they were not exploited in any way. Jones (2004) asserts that the child who is a researcher is engaged in real work, and conditions of this work should be considered. It is also the responsibility of the adult researcher to ensure the young people have the appropriate training so they can carry out the research tasks appropriately (Jones, 2004; McLaughlin, 2006). In order to ensure the young researchers understood what the research was about and what was expected of them, a training programme ran throughout the life of the project on a cyclical basis. The training followed the ethos of PAR and was very much embedded in the philosophy of ‘learning by doing’. Topics included data collection methods and tools, ethics, dissemination, report writing and others as the need arose. We used the research data gathered at meetings, in training and in data collection activities to inform each stage of the process.

5.2.3 Data Collection

The first stage of data collection was to investigate the bullying definition for the school. In line with the key features of this study and that of social constructionism, the group accepted the philosophy that multiple truths exist. As a result we used two data collection methods to ascertain whether or not students, teachers and parents²⁴ agreed with the imposed bullying definition set by the school. Before collecting data, ethical approval was sought from the University Research Ethics Panel²⁵.

²⁴ From here the term ‘parents’ will include parents and carers.

²⁵ Please see section 5.3 for more details on the ethical approval process.

Questionnaires and a focus group were used to gather data for this first cycle. Darbyshire et al. (2005) argue that researching children's experiences using multiple methods is valuable as it does not duplicate or replace the data already found but offers further insights and understandings that might not always be possible through the use of a single data collection method. The area of bullying research can be highly sensitive for some young people and the research team felt that the use of a questionnaire was one way for people to tell their stories in an anonymous way. Furthermore this method enabled us to capture the viewpoints of a wide range of students and to offer further participation for those who wanted to tell us more through an interview or focus group.

In order to ensure we were asking the right questions we conducted pilot studies at the beginning of each of the questionnaires and practiced the focus group questions in role-plays. This approach allowed us to focus on the perceptions of all research participants while finding similarities in the data, thus drawing on the multiple realities ever present in this study. Specifically related to this doctoral study was the belief that meanings associated with bullying are varied and multiple and that each research participant, and indeed researcher, had their own stories to tell. Equally, how participants and researchers chose to participate in the study varied and this fluidity in the project was fully embraced.

A broad thematic analysis took place at the end of this cycle, which allowed the team to work together and 'pull out' the core issues raised by participants. It also allowed us to determine the focus of the study for cycle two. This kept in line with what Kidd and Kral (2005) consider as the 'action' in PAR projects, where the focus is more on how the inquiry and process will inform the action, rather than focussing specifically on the research questions.

The questionnaire design

An online questionnaire was used to ascertain the views of all members of the school community with regards to the bullying definition in use by the school. We (the research team) also wanted to find out from the school community how they felt with regards to how bullying is managed and handled in the school. Ideally all participants would have been involved in an interview or focus group but this was impractical with a sample size of over 1,000 people. It was thus decided that a total population survey would provide the best data and all members of the school community had the option to participate and

contribute to the generation of new knowledge. It was anticipated that a total population survey had the potential to include a plethora of views and opinions as Barriball and While (1994) found when exploring the needs and perceptions of nurses in continuing professional education. As such a probability sampling framework was used whereby all members of the school community had an equal opportunity to participate.

The initial decision to use a questionnaire as a data collection method was made by the group on our first all-day training session in February 2010²⁶. The decision to use SurveyMonkey was made in March 2010. At our all day training session in February we did an activity on data collection methods where I provided each member of R4U with a folder containing pictures of a selection of research methods and together we discussed how data could be generated using the different methods. We discussed the pros and cons of each method.²⁷ Some methods and approaches were discussed in detail such as the use of a recorder during an interview or focus group:

“Good for recording the interview” (Sarah)

“More portable than a video recorder” (Taha)

“Students feel better if only their voices are being recorded” (Hanik)

The group considered the negative effects of using a voice recorder:

“Unwanted sound picked up” (Hanik)

“If you use them with lots of people in the room you might not know who everyone is on the recording.” (Sarah)

Following this exercise we decided that a questionnaire would be best for our project initially to determine views about the school bullying definition and how bullying was dealt with in school. This method would allow us to *“Gather data from lots of people”* (Taha) but we also had to be mindful that *“Everyone might not return them so we might not get as many as we’d like”* (Sarah).

We discussed how we could ask the students about the bullying definition using a questionnaire. Hanik suggested

“We could print the definition in double line spacing and ask them to write over it if they have anything they want to change.”

This method would allow the students to critique the definition and was supported by other members of the team. It was agreed that if students had no comments to make a tick box would be provided where they could tick to show they agreed and did not want

²⁶ Up to this point we had been meeting over lunchtime but the half term in February allowed us to meet for a full day.

²⁷ Please see appendix 2 for a group analysis of the pros and cons of each research method.

to make any changes. The second part of the questionnaire focussed on people's satisfaction with the way the school handled incidents of bullying.

As ideas about our questionnaire developed we discussed the use of an online questionnaire as R4U felt this might hold more interest than the paper copy and Patrick suggested: "*students could complete this at the end of IT lessons.*" Other group members were concerned about coercion, as students could feel pressured into completing the questionnaire if a dedicated time was allocated to it. A further problem we encountered was that participants would not be able to write over the definition once it was online. Patrick suggested providing the definition and asking:

"If you agree with the definition tick a box and if you don't agree tell us why"

The team agreed with this approach.

The pilot

Before conducting the online questionnaire a pilot study was carried out. van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) describe the pilot study as crucial to the study design. They suggest that this element does not guarantee the main study will be successful but increases the likelihood of success. One of the advantages as discussed by van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) is that the pilot study can warn researchers in advance of where specific tools or instruction might be too complicated for the full study. van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) also suggest a disadvantage of the pilot is contamination where the pilot data is used in the main study and/or the participants from the pilot participate again in the main study. To avoid contamination, data from the pilot were not used in the main study and this was explained to participants. It could be argued that because the questionnaires were anonymous, pilot participants could have participated again but we asked them not to and had to take their word that they would not participate. Pilot studies were not carried out for the staff or parent questionnaires as we had already received understanding from the students and the adult questions were similarly written.

During the pilot study every member of R4U brought along a friend to complete the questionnaire online²⁸. Six students participated from years seven to thirteen (five boys and one girl). Once they had completed the questionnaire we asked them to complete a short evaluation so we could assess how accessible or otherwise the questionnaire was before launching it as a data collection tool.²⁹ This process was followed to ensure students understood the questions in the questionnaire and that they were able to follow

²⁸ Please see appendix 5 for the student questionnaire for cycle one.

²⁹ Please see appendix 4 for the pilot questionnaire

the instructions given. Validating the questionnaire in this way was also useful in limiting researcher bias in terms of how questions were phrased. This proved valuable as the feedback ensured we made changes to the questionnaire making it more understandable and accessible to the students. Changes to the questionnaire included moving questions to allow for easier navigation. Some students were anxious about the text being too big and were concerned that students would not complete it if they felt others could see their responses. We therefore made it clearer that students could complete the questionnaire at home or wherever they were comfortable to do so.

Questionnaire completion

The questionnaire was available for students to complete from 26th April 2010 until the 27th November 2010. The reason we decided to leave the questionnaire open for such a long period was due to the difficulties we had in encouraging students, staff and parents to complete it. The areas covered in the questionnaire³⁰ were:

- Demographic data: age, gender, boarder/day student
- Agreement or disagreement with the school bullying definition.
- Any involvement in a bullying incident.
- Who they reported the bullying to (if applicable)
- Satisfied or unsatisfied with the outcome of reporting.
- Why bullying was not reported (if applicable)
- Overall satisfaction with how the school handles bullying incidents.
- Finally participants were asked if they would like to add anything further.

Many challenges were experienced in encouraging participants to complete the questionnaire and we had to use a variety of advertising approaches:

- Initially I presented the questionnaire to the staff team while R4U spoke directly to their form tutors.
- Together we wrote an article in the school newsletter including the links to all the questionnaires.
- An IT teacher placed the link for the questionnaires on the student drive on the school computers.
- A poster in the staff room promoted the staff questionnaire.
- Fliers in the main reception reminded parents.

³⁰ All questionnaires for cycle one can be found at appendix 5.

- Advisory group members appealed to the school community.

The response rate was still low so I proposed four ideas:

1. We hand out the link to the survey to every student in the lunch queue, library and common rooms and ask them to complete it.
2. We send an email to all students and staff members and ask them to complete it.
3. We speak to the school council.
4. We only hold interviews and invite students to get involved and offer a £15 voucher to everyone – aim to have approximately twenty.

Following this discussion, Hanik suggested we use the second part of our current meeting to ask people to fill in the questionnaire, in the library and anywhere else we could find them. Following this approach the response rate rose from 12 to 41. Despite this increase we had very few responses from girls. By this time the three girls who had been part of the initial team left the research project (see 5.2.2) and the team consisted of three boys, which we felt heavily influenced the response rate in favour of boys. Two more girls joined the group at this point and the response rate from girls rapidly increased. At this time we offered students the opportunity to complete the questionnaire in paper format rather than online. With the girls promoting the questionnaire among the female students and some students opting to complete the paper copies, our responses rose from 41 to 93, approaching 10% of the school population. At this point we decided to close the questionnaire and focus on designing the focus group topic guide.

The focus group

We decided that it would also be useful to talk to some students face-to-face about their views through either focus groups or interviews. R4U were keen on a focus group because:

“People will talk in a conversational manner so they’ll tell you more” (Hanik)

Disadvantages of the focus group as identified by both Taha and Sarah were:

“Some people might dominate the group” (Taha)

“Some people might not talk” (Sarah)

while for an interview Sarah suggested:

“We might get more information from people in an interview than a focus group because they might feel more comfortable to talk”

though Taha reminded us:

“People might feel pressured to talk if it’s just them”

We decided to allow the participating students to decide what method they would prefer so on the questionnaire we asked them to provide their contact details if they would like to tell us more about their experiences. We later explained, to those who were interested in speaking to us, what an interview and focus group involved and asked them to choose which option they preferred. I also had a small budget to provide £15 of high street vouchers to any student who participated in one of these ways.

We experienced difficulties recruiting students to speak to us about their experiences of bullying so we had a second meeting with the advisory group. Eight students had given us their details and opted for a focus group rather than an interview. Despite numerous attempts at contacting them (email and phone) we could not get any commitment. The age range of our interested students was from year eight to eleven (eight students) and we were worried that this age-range might be too broad. The advisory group advised us that one group would be better than splitting into two or doing individual interviews. This was agreed by R4U. We talked about whether some students might attend for the voucher and not particularly participate very well in the group. We agreed that this was a possibility.

When another attempt at contacting the students via email and phone was unsuccessful it was decided that members of R4U would approach students in the school to participate in the focus group. I brought along the consent forms and participant information sheets for R4U to give to the students they were approaching. I asked that the approached students receive permission from their parent/carer/house master/mistress in advance of the focus group taking place because they would not be allowed to participate without it³¹.

We did some training around approaching a student for this task and agreed that this was a highly sensitive topic and some people might not like to be approached in front of their friends. We did role-plays about how this could be done including a scenario where the student required more detail on the project. Taha acted as the student being approached and Hanik was the researcher. Taha wanted to know why he should be involved and what was in it for him. He also wanted to know how the session would run. Hanik explained that Taha had completed our questionnaire and said he would like to participate in a focus group to tell us more about his experiences. He reminded him of the £15 voucher and told him I would be there as the adult researcher as well as

³¹ Please see section 5.3.1 for a discussion on competence to consent

somebody from R4U. He told him it would be tape-recorded with his permission. Following this role-play and others, R4U felt confident to approach students to participate in the focus group.

When approached, six students said they were interested in participating in the focus group but on the day only three students appeared. Two other interested students told Amy that their parents would not consent to them taking part³². The focus group participants were two boys and one girl. One boy was from year ten (boarder) and the other boy and girl were from year nine (day students). The focus group³³ discussion covered the following areas:

- The bullying definition in the school
- Who students are most likely/least likely to report bullying incidents to
- General satisfaction with how bullying is dealt with in school
- Four vignettes were read out each describing separate potential bullying incidents and participants were asked to decide whether or not bullying had occurred.
- Finally participants were asked if they would like to add anything further.

During the focus group Amy took notes and everyone else contributed to the discussion. We started the session with me introducing the topic and ensuring everyone was fully aware of why they were there and also that they were happy to be there. We began with a name game and devised some ground rules around confidentiality. The session lasted approximately one hour and ended abruptly when the fire alarm sounded and we had to evacuate. All participants were presented with £15 'love-to-shop' vouchers as a thank you for their time.

The focus group was tape recorded (with permission) and participants were given the option of being in charge of the tape recorder so they could decide what parts of the discussion should be recorded (Thomas and O'Kane, 1998). The tape recorder was left in the centre of the table during the focus group and if participants did not want something recorded they could request that the recorder was switched off or they could do this themselves. Furthermore, students were also informed that they could choose to have a support person present during the focus group if this helped them to participate.

³² This would result in a change in the project for cycle two when we approached the ethics committee for approval based on the fact that we did not want to approach parents for consent. Please see chapter 8, section 8.3

³³ The focus group topic guide can be found at appendix 9.

To keep the focus group transcript confidential, participants were not provided with a copy to reaffirm their contribution afterwards. Instead, regular presentations, an article for the school newsletter and a research report presented to the school community were made. Participants were told after the focus group that if these reports did not match what they were saying they could raise this with me or any member of R4U where their objection would be addressed.

Involving parents and school staff proved problematic during cycle one. Despite our best efforts to inform these two groups via the school newsletter, information left at reception for parents, presentations to the staff team and direct appeals from R4U, the response rate remained low as can be seen in TABLE 5.3 below.

TABLE 5.3: Methods used and numbers of participants responding in cycle one

Respondents	Method	Timeframe	Number of participants	Gender	
				M	F
Students	Online questionnaire	26th April 2010 - 27th November 2010	93	53	40
	Focus Group	December 2010	3 (from the 93 above)	2	1
School staff	Online questionnaire	26th April 2010 - 27th November 2010	2	1	1
Parents	Online questionnaire	26th April 2010 - 27th November 2010	2	0	2
Total			97	54	43

5.2.4 Analysis

In qualitative research, data collection and data analysis run concurrently with data analysis often starting once a researcher enters the research field (Gibbs, 2009). Gibbs (2009) asserts that as a researcher collects interview data, takes field notes, examines documents and carries out other activities the data analysis can begin. Gibbs further writes that conducting data collection and analysis at the same time is good practice as it enables researchers to use earlier previous analysis to consider further areas for inquiry and raise further research questions. This approach was taken with this doctoral study where learning from each of the stages of the PAR process was carried into the

next stage.³⁴ This iterative process was conducted with the research team through a semantic analysis of the data, and then by me in the latent stages of the analysis.

The first cycle was exploratory in order to lay the foundations for further study. Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001) suggest that with cyclical work such as PAR, analysis in the first cycle is usually descriptive in order to generate data for practical action. The chosen analytical approach:

“...needs to be appropriate for ‘feeding back’ into the developmental process, as an agenda for the discussion of possible action” (Winter and Munn-Giddings, 2001:20).

We began to analyse data in June 2010 during an all-day training event. The purpose was twofold. Firstly we wanted to see what was emerging from the data to devise an interview schedule for the focus group. We had initially decided that the focus group would be used to tease out any pertinent issues raised in the questionnaire data. Secondly we wanted to determine the issue for investigation for cycle two. Data analysis was conducted again at the end of cycle one when we combined the questionnaire and focus group data.

A semantic analysis was carried out in both phases of analysis in cycle one. The purpose of the semantic analysis was to answer our research questions and identify surface level themes. Using this approach we did not look beyond the surface as we were more interested in what it was that the students were telling us in order to decide the topic for investigation in cycle two (Braun and Clarke, 2006). For the semantic analysis we used a pragmatic model identified by Aronson (1994), using four stages of analysis. The research team carried out the first three stages together and the fourth was added to the latent analysis I conducted in 2014.

1. Data were examined to identify common themes - direct quotes and paraphrasing of common ideas were used to show links between themes.
2. Data were examined for a second time to generate sub-themes under each main theme.
3. Themes emerging from each transcript were pulled together to form a broader view of the combined experiences. This helped identify emerging patterns.
4. Links were identified between themes and the related literature to address the research question. Thus when literature was combined with the findings it added strength to the research.

³⁴ Please see the research design and process model (FIGURE 5.1) in section 5.2.

Although thematic analysis is usually used with qualitative research, some would argue it could be used with quantitative research as variables included in surveys can be extracted as 'themes' similar to the way conceptual themes are extracted from qualitative research (Popay et al., 2006). As this doctoral research included data generated from both qualitative and quantitative research tools thematic analysis was deemed appropriate.

With thematic analysis, the process is largely inductive, in other words, it does not have a complete set of a priori themes to guide the data extraction and analysis from the start (Popay et al., 2006; Grbich, 2007). In this sense the analysis is data-driven and the research question can evolve through the coding process (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In the case of this doctoral research, data were coded in an inductive manner to allow the voices of research participants to be heard and all opinions included.

As this study was firmly rooted in the philosophy of social constructionism the data analysis was underpinned by the notion that our experiences of the world are underpinned by multiple, socially constructed realities:

“These constructions are created because individuals want to make sense of their experiences.” (Gibbs, 2009:7).

The analysis conducted by a social constructionist therefore must remain authentic to the individual constructions without reference to a shared reality. In this way constructionists cannot say how the world is but only how some people see it (Gibbs, 2009).

Provisional analysis of the questionnaire data

Before deciding on the questions to ask in the interviews or focus groups (depending on the choices made by participants) we conducted a provisional analysis of the questionnaire data to see what students were telling us about the bullying situation in the school. This began with a full day session in June 2010 over the half term. This day allowed us to begin looking at the questionnaire data we had to date (64 responses) and to look for themes in the qualitative data. Our intention was to draft the questions based on emerging themes from the questionnaire data.

The three boys attended the full day session. The focus of the day was analysing the questionnaire data, which continued for some weeks due to the volume of data and the questions we wanted to ask of it. The survey data was printed in preparation for the analysis day so we could read through it and see what was emerging. As this questionnaire was mainly quantitative through SurveyMonkey, graphs were produced

and we were particularly interested in the comments provided by students in the 'tell us more' sections. This data enabled us to construct themes through thematic analysis.

We explored the data in response to the bullying definition and decided that the definition question was worth exploring further in a focus group or interview. More questions emerged as we sifted the data; Patrick suggested that maybe in this school *"teachers and students have different views on what bullying is."* We discussed whether this was because teachers did not take bullying in school seriously or because students felt they were having a joke but teachers took it too seriously. We also found at this point that nobody had removed or added anything to the school definition.

When we read through the data on reporting bullying, more questions emerged from the team. We were particularly interested in students reporting repercussions for reporting bullying incidents in school. A conversation followed about the concept of the one who is known for reporting bullying or 'the snitch'. We discussed whether reporting bullying could make the situation worse through losing friends and possibly being labelled a 'snitch':

"Maybe people are afraid to report it because they don't want to be called a snitch" (Taha)

"Or maybe they are afraid of what the bully will do to them if they find out" (Patrick).

We considered the possibility of researching the 'snitch' and fear around reporting bullying for cycle two.

At this point we were able to see that the main reasons students did not report bullying in school were either because it was not serious enough or the person was too frightened to report it. We returned to our discussion about the idea of the 'snitch' and Hanik said:

"...students should be able to tell someone without the repercussions of being labelled a 'snitch'."

The boys were also interested in teachers' and students' perceptions of bullying and Taha asked:

"Who decides when the bullying is serious enough is it teachers or students? When does messing about turn to bullying?"

End of cycle one data analysis

Analysis of the combined cycle one data began in January 2011 and continued until February 2011. At the end of cycle one we had 93 responses to the questionnaire and

the focus group had taken place with three participants. As we had newer members to the group³⁵ and as a refresher for the older members we had a recap on data analysis. Once all the questionnaire data was collated we examined it for a second time, together with the focus group transcript. Graphs from SurveyMonkey were produced to show us the quantitative data and we examined the qualitative data together over a number of weeks. We did not see any new patterns emerge from the first round of analysis but we had more responses from girls as Amy and Debbie had promoted the questionnaire among their year group and boarders. This improved the representativeness of our sample.

Throughout the analytical process it was evident that discrepancies existed in the data. This was particularly true of the data where students who had agreed with the school bullying definition gave contradictory accounts of a bullying situation in school. In some cases the students believed bullying had not taken place but the teachers thought differently and vice versa. For this aspect I opted to use dilemma analysis throughout the thematic analysis. Dilemma analysis as described by Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001:239) involves:

“Statements which are contradicted in any way are thus picked out from the rest of the data as indicating issues in the situation about which participants may disagree. Such issues are potentially ‘interesting’, not only as a way of creating an interpretation of the situation but also for the practical development of the project, in that they indicate areas where further discussion will be needed in order to create agreement on the next step to be taken.”

This dilemma analysis formed part of the iterative process and the discussions which followed, allowed us as a team to take the learning from one cycle into the next cycle.

The latent analysis

Although guided by the research questions, for this latent stage of analysis I wanted the analysis to be led by the data in the same way the semantic analysis had been led. For this reason I did not re-read the semantic analysis and findings until the latent phase was completed. The latent analysis was carried out using six phases identified by Braun and Clarke (2006). This is not a linear process and moving backwards and forwards between the six phases is expected as data analysis is “an ongoing organic process” (Braun and Clarke, 2006:91).

³⁵ Please see TABLE 5.2 section 5.2.2 for more details.

1. Familiarising yourself with the data

To begin the analysis I re-immersed myself in the data through reading and re-reading the data in an active way - making notes for ideas of codes and looking for patterns in the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that verbal data should be transcribed so researchers can re-familiarise themselves with the data. For my study, a paid third party transcribed the focus group. Once I began the latent stage I listened to the focus group audio again whilst reading the transcript to establish accuracy. The qualitative data from the questionnaires, along with the focus group transcript were transferred into NVIVO 10 software and coding began. I was able to track each participant's questionnaire response using the unique code provided by SurveyMonkey. I could thus return to the original responses to complete the full picture from each respondent.

2. Generating initial codes

The data were then ready for organisation into meaningful groups through codes. The analysis for this study was data driven so I was concerned with what the students were saying about their acceptance or otherwise of the bullying definition in the school. Equally this analysis allowed me to further investigate what the students were revealing about bullying in school and reaffirmed the research team's decisions for the topic of investigation for cycle two. During this phase I identified aspects from the data that were interesting or that I felt addressed the research question. I did not use a pre-existing framework to determine what was meaningful but did so purely by analysing what individuals were saying about the phenomenon under study.

3. Searching for themes

The coded data were then organised into broader themes. This stage:

“....involves sorting the different codes into potential themes, and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes” (Braun and Clarke, 2006:89).

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest the use of a visual representation of the analysis at this stage to help sort the codes into themes, so I used thematic maps. This allowed me to determine the broader emerging themes and sub-themes as well as those themes that, although were interesting, did not fit the themes identified. Importantly Braun and Clarke (2006) remind us that the worth of a theme does not depend on frequency but what it represents about the research question.

4. Reviewing themes

This fourth phase involves reviewing and refining the themes from phase three. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that at the end of phase three the researcher will have a set of 'candidate themes' and that phase four involves refining these themes. The importance at this stage is:

"Data within themes should cohere together meaningfully, while there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes" (Braun and Clarke, 2006:91).

Two levels of reviewing and refining of the data happened at this phase. The first involved reading the collated extracts allocated to each theme to ascertain if a coherent pattern was evident. The second level involved determining the validity of the themes in relation to the entire data set. This process involved re-reading the data again to ensure coherence across the dataset and equally it allowed me the opportunity to code any missed data. By the end of this phase a clear thematic map was evident (Braun and Clarke, 2006). During this phase, data that did not address the research question were finally discarded.

5. Defining and naming themes

This stage of the analytical process is about defining and refining the themes from the thematic map. This process involves:

"...identifying the 'essence' of what each theme is about (as well as the themes overall), and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures." (Braun and Clarke, 2006:92)

During this process I was able to identify the story that each theme was telling but equally ensuring coherence and distinctions between each theme (see phase four). It was during this final stage that three broad areas, with a number of subthemes, were evident from the data. These three areas addressed the research questions and allowed for the collective and individual experiences to emerge.

6. Producing the report

The write up of the data analysis is addressed in chapter six. During this final part of the analysis Braun and Clarke (2006) state that this is where the story of the analysis is presented. Data extracts must be included to demonstrate the essence of a particular theme. Importantly though, the chosen extracts must be embedded within the analytical narrative

"...that compellingly illustrates the story you are telling about your data, and your analytical narrative needs to go beyond description of the data, and

make an argument in relation to your research question.” (Braun and Clarke, 2006:93).

5.2.5 Dissemination

As the project evolved, a number of presentations took place in the school. During this time the research team provided feedback to the school community about our findings and the progress made in the project. Additionally an article was printed in the school newsletter, distributed to parents on a monthly basis, so as to keep them informed about the project and how they could become involved. At the end of cycle one, we wrote a research report,³⁶ which was made available to all students and staff in the school in booklet format. Our advisory group were paramount in disseminating our work as they circulated the school report and informed students of the work we were doing. McLaughlin (2006) proposes that when young researchers are involved in the dissemination process the message can be more powerful than when adults deliver the same message without the involvement of young people.

At the end of cycle one, R4U received an award from the local council as a result of the time and effort they had contributed to the project and these awards were presented and celebrated at a school assembly. Furthermore this research was recorded in the schools Independent Schools Inspectorate report (2010) as an example of where students were encouraged to become involved in the study and contributing to developing an understanding of bullying in school.

5.3 Ethical Considerations

Separate ethical applications were made through the University Research Ethics Committee for data collection in cycles one³⁷ and two³⁸. At all stages of the research, ethical guidelines issued by Anglia Ruskin University were followed especially in relation to acquiring *voluntary informed consent* from participants, ensuring *freedom from harm* and *anonymity*. However due to the close and collaborative relationship of PAR, political and ethical problems can arise for both researchers and participants (Williamson and Prosser, 2002) and this needed to be considered throughout the research process.

5.3.1 Voluntary Informed consent

Masson (2000) defines competence as the level of understanding needed to make choices. Coyne (2010) argues that parental consent is not always necessary in social research and children can consent once deemed competent. However this notion of

³⁶ Please see appendix 10 for the cycle one research report.

³⁷ Please see appendix 3 for ethical approval letter for cycle one

³⁸ Please see appendix 11 for ethical approval letter for cycle two

competence was not upheld by the ethics committee in cycle one. Initially the ethics committee required me to obtain consent from parents and assent from students, however I argued that assent does not apply. I argued that as the students were aged from 11 to 18 years they were deemed competent to give their own consent for involvement unless it could be proven otherwise (Alderson, 2007). As the ethics committee were not comfortable to grant permission without parental involvement I suggested that I would obtain permission from those with parental responsibility³⁹ for the students wishing to take part in the focus group but that consent to actually take part would come from the students themselves⁴⁰. The ethics committee approved this approach and Fox (2013) argues that university ethics committees are usually unfamiliar with the theoretical underpinnings that children are viewed as social actors and therefore, for the most part are able to consent for themselves. This decision was challenged in cycle two and is discussed in chapter eight. Students who chose to participate through the questionnaire implied their consent through participation.

PAR is a constant evolving journey and the aspect of informed consent may not be as meaningful as in other forms of research (Williamson and Prosser, 2002). This is because the research participants cannot guarantee where the journey will lead them, and therefore cannot fully know what they are consenting to (Williamson and Prosser, 2002). Meyer (1993) argues that traditional aspects of informed consent are not adequate for AR because this consent involves the participant's desire and eagerness to be involved in the study and also to support the ideas made for change. Meyer (1993) contends that in many cases, cooperation in AR is forced and therefore contradicts the ethos of willing participation. In this study young people had a choice about their level of participation and they were free to leave the project at any point.

The Declaration of Helsinki states that adequate information must be made available to research participants about the project, informing them that participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time (Hill, 1997; Kellett, 2010a). Details of how students could become involved in the study were presented in a school assembly. Participant information sheets⁴¹ were made available to students giving full details of the study including the right to withdraw with an emphasis on voluntary participation (Kellett, 2010a).

³⁹ Please see appendix 8 for parent permission form.

⁴⁰ Please see appendix 6 for the student consent form

⁴¹ The student participant information sheet can be found at appendix 7.

5.3.2 Freedom from harm

Mahon et al. (1996) make reference to the vulnerability of children when undertaking research. They may be discussing areas of their lives they have not spoken about with others and this could cause distress as well as be potentially threatening to a child's wellbeing (Holmes, 1998). During this study the option was provided for students to have a spokesperson present at the focus group should they require additional support if they felt uncomfortable or threatened. Furthermore, a list of support agencies was made available after the focus group if students wished to explore issues further. This information was also included in the back of the cycle one research report which was disseminated around the school.

It was equally important to ensure that R4U were protected from any potential harm when conducting research. R4U received training in running a focus group in cycle one and also helped to co-run the focus group with me. Training included confidentiality, child protection and interview role-play.

Collaborative ethical issues were evident in this project. As an outside facilitator it was important for me to ensure that R4U were able to accept and verify the claims we were making about the data (Williamson and Prosser, 2002). This was done through constant evaluation work and verifying findings together.⁴² Through this process, a sense of ownership of the project was taken by R4U as they worked together to determine the course of research for cycle two.

When doing research with children the issue of confidentiality can be difficult. Mahon et al. (1996) notes that researchers generally believe confidentiality can never really be guaranteed to child participants. This is because if a child, during the course of an interview, reveals that they or another child is at risk then the researcher must pass on this information to safeguard that child (Mahon et al., 1996; Holmes, 1998). The claim is also true for adult participants. Nevertheless, the protocol used in the study by Mahon et al. (1996) was used here. Students were informed that confidentiality was guaranteed unless it was necessary to break it but that nothing would happen without informing them first. Additionally, I was fully aware of the school's child protection policy, which was followed at all times. It is noted that such action could taint the research in relation to behaviour and full participation but it is more important to take responsibility for the wellbeing of the participants (deVaus, 2001). Training for R4U members covered issues of child protection and the young researchers were made aware of whom to contact

⁴² Please see section 5.2.4, for more details on how the data were analysed.

should these issues arise. Additionally if a disclosure was made then support would be provided to the young researchers in accordance with the schools child protection policy.

5.3.3 Anonymity

The Data Protection Act (1998) regulates the collection, storage, use and dissemination of personal data with the fundamental principle being the protection of the rights of individuals in respect to personal data held about them (Grinyer, 2002). To increase the security of data processing, all data identifying participants must remain anonymous. Once data is anonymous and cannot identify the individual, they are exempt from the Act (Grinyer, 2002). In AR however, Meyer (1993) reminds us that the findings from the inquiry are intended to be owned by the participants. Transcripts for this doctoral project were shared in research team meetings, where action was reviewed and discussed. R4U had training around confidentiality, which stressed that any details identifying participants must not be discussed outside the research team meetings.

In this study, all participants agreeing to take part were allocated a pseudonym. This pseudonym was used throughout as a form of identity and no names or any other details identifying the participants to others were kept with the pseudonym. I kept contact details in a locked filing cabinet only accessible by me, along with a copy of the transcribed interviews. Recordings were password protected and stored on my university laptop. All other data was stored on my university laptop using the NVIVO software programme, which was password protected and only accessible by me. Meyer (1993) talks about writing up the thesis after carrying out an AR project, as it is quite likely that participants will be easily identified. In my study, the school in question had a large population so when data were analysed and disseminated, participants could potentially recognise themselves through their assigned pseudonym, but the reader was not able to identify them (Grinyer, 2002). R4U requested that they be identified in the final write up and like Meyer (1993) I asked the group, post the project work, if they would like to read the thesis chapters identifying them as they were written. I did not receive any responses to this request and I recognise that R4U have moved on, with some members attending university. They therefore did not have the time to commit any more to this project.

Williamson and Prosser (2002) argue that these pertinent ethical issues need to be addressed by researchers before the research begins. The closeness associated with PAR can be seen as a strength in generating new knowledge and making changes but this closeness can also be problematic (Williamson and Prosser, 2002). In the words of Alderson (2004:109):

“...ethics help researchers to be more aware of hidden problems although they do not provide easy answers”.

It was therefore important that these issues were addressed from the outset and constantly revisited as the study evolved.

The second part of this chapter presents the two participation evaluations conducted during this first cycle of research and ends with a proposition of refining an evaluation tool used to evaluate the involvement of young people in research.

5.4 Evaluation of cycle one

Two evaluations took place in cycle one; the first provided an opportunity for me to ascertain how involved R4U were feeling up to that point and took place in June 2010 approximately six months into cycle one. The second used an extended version of the Dual-axis Model of Participation (DMP)⁴³ (Moules and O'Brien, 2012) to evaluate participation during the whole of cycle one and took place in March 2011. MacKenzie et al. (2012) suggest that one of the key features setting PAR aside from AR is the process of evaluation and involving co-researchers in this evaluation.

5.4.1 Evaluation one

The first evaluation took place after we had designed our questionnaire, conducted the pilot study and collated some data. The three girls had left the team so this evaluation involved the three boys⁴⁴. I asked the boys four questions about their perception of their own involvement in the project and I produced a vertical line (see FIGURE 5.2 below) with ‘full involvement’ at the top and ‘no involvement’ at the bottom. The first two questions asked them to mark on the line where they considered their own involvement to be. Qualitative data was provided to support their answers.

- How involved did you feel about the decisions made regarding the questionnaire?
- How involved did you feel in the decision on how to advertise the questionnaire?
- Give some examples of where you felt your decision or input to the decision was taken seriously.
- Are you enjoying the project? Can you say why?

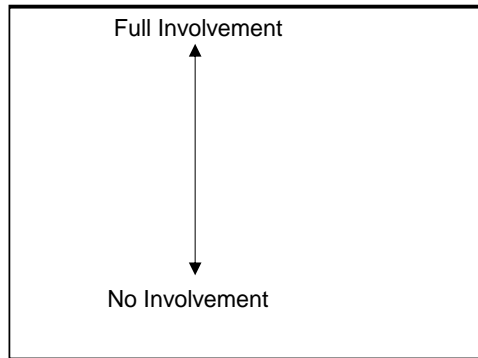
How involved did you feel about the decisions made regarding the questionnaire?

Taha and Hanik felt they had ‘full involvement’ in the decisions made about the questionnaire, while Patrick rated himself further down the line. Patrick felt he was not as fully involved because he “*Was not there for the first meeting on it*”.

⁴³ Please see chapter three section 3.4.2 for more information on the DMP.

⁴⁴ Please see TABLE 5.1 in section 5.2.2 for the original R4U members

FIGURE 5.2: Continuum of Involvement



The term 'involved' was not defined for or with the young researchers prior to this evaluation so there was a possibility that Patrick interpreted the term 'involvement' differently to the other team members. However from the beginning R4U were only expected to participate on their own terms and no pressure was ever exerted to attend meetings. Our meetings were held on Monday lunchtimes and for half of this time Patrick

attended orchestra practice. Taha and Hanik were usually at meetings so there is a possibility that they felt more involved.

At times it was clear when unanimous group decisions were made, for example we made joint decisions when we were initially designing the questionnaire⁴⁵. I provided R4U with a sample questionnaire developed by a group of young people I was working with at this time. R4U did not like this format:

"It's very long" (Hanik)

A decision was made by the group to keep our questionnaire succinct and to the point:

"We don't want to ask them about things that aren't related to our topic. I think this questionnaire asks way too many things" (Patrick).

R4U were clear they wanted a 'to the point' questionnaire. They were certain that students would not complete the questionnaire if it was long-winded. I had made an assumption that R4U would welcome the questionnaire example because it had been designed by another group of young people but this was not the case. This reiterated to me that a tool designed by one group of young people would not necessarily be chosen by another group of young people. Furthermore, I was content that R4U were confident enough to be honest about this design and not accept the format because I had presented it to them as an option.

There were times however, when it was clear that some decisions did not suit all group members, for example in relation to a specific question on the questionnaire. Taha was adamant that he did not like us asking participants about their ethnic origin. In the sample questionnaire a question asked young people to choose their ethnic origin from a series of bubbles on the page with no hierarchical order. Taha did not like the format of this question: *"I absolutely hate this question!"* (Taha). In acknowledging Taha's reluctance

⁴⁵Please see section 5.2.3 for more details on the cycle one questionnaire.

to use this question we discussed reasons why it might be important to the research and decided that as the school had a vast ethnic mix the data might reveal information about bullying and specific ethnic groups of participants. We talked about the best way to frame this question and Sarah suggested *“Why don’t we use the list the school uses?”* The team agreed but Taha would have preferred if we did not ask the question at all. In fact, our data did not show any findings specifically related to any ethnic group in the school in either of the data collection cycles. Furthermore a number of parents and one teacher from cycle two did not answer the question about ethnic origin. One parent asked us why such a question was relevant on the survey.

How involved did you feel in the decision on how to advertise the questionnaire?

Team members had different ideas about advertising our questionnaire from placing posters in different locations to emailing students and staff. A decision was made among the team for each member to take responsibility for advertising in the location they suggested. Taha and Patrick felt they had been fully involved in this decision-making process while Hanik felt his involvement was towards the middle of the line. He felt his involvement in advertising the questionnaire was: *“More on where to place it”*, rather than deciding the layout and wording of posters and presentation materials.

Give some examples of where you felt your decision or input to the decision was taken seriously.

Hanik suggested he had input into promoting the questionnaire:

“When suggesting who to talk to such as [teacher]”

Patrick felt his input was taken seriously when:

“Saying we should not offer iPods”

When the response rate was particularly low I suggested that we offer an incentive for completion through a competition to win an iPod. Patrick rejected this idea as he felt this prize would not encourage the students. Furthermore he was concerned about the responses previously collated, which could not be entered into this draw as we did not have contact details. He also felt he was listened to when:

“Deciding to get my tutor group to do the questionnaire”

Taha was particularly proud of his suggestion of the name for the group:

“Name of the project – R4U name was my idea and it was taken seriously”

Are you enjoying the project? Can you say why?

The three boys reported that they were enjoying their time doing this research and being part of the group. They all said they were learning something new:

“It’s not too serious but I’m learning new skills” (Hanik)

"It's fun and I'm learning how to research" (Patrick)

"I can use this as a skill for my D of E" (Taha)

Other reasons for enjoyment included lunch provision:

"Monday lunch is nice" (Hanik)

"I also get good food" (Patrick)

Hanik reported that he liked:

"Meeting new people"

While Taha said:

"I feel my input is taken seriously and I feel that I am a valued member of the project"

Conclusions on evaluation one

A theme evident throughout this short evaluation was that if R4U members were not attending all meetings and present when decisions were made they regarded this as non-involvement. It was important, after this evaluation, for me to revisit with R4U what participation meant to them and what was expected of them while they were involved in the project. McIntyre (2008) suggests that quality rather than quantity in terms of the number of meetings attended is what is important in participatory research. The research team took this stance and agreed that it was crucial for the project, and indeed their own satisfaction, that team members participated on their own terms and acknowledged that there would be times when not everybody could attend meetings. Indeed Kirby et al. (2003a) suggest that participation is about having some influence over decisions and actions and not merely about being present or taking part. O'Kane (2008) reiterates that when young people are given space to participate on their own terms they can be more involved in meetings and are further motivated to take an active role in other aspects of the research. In taking this project forward it was important that R4U were able to recognise the opportunities to be involved in decision-making and in aspects of decision-making. When designing the questionnaire, for example, decisions were made based on the plethora of ideas generated by the whole team. Patrick suggested he did not have full involvement in the decisions made about the questionnaire because he was not there from the outset. However Patrick was fundamental in the decisions made about content and layout as well as in the decision not to use an iPod as an incentive for students to complete the questionnaire. It could be argued, with the latter decision that the ideas and control rested with Patrick while the rest of the team agreed with his idea leading to the decision. On the other hand, Taha had an idea not to include the question about ethnic origin but this decision was over-ruled by the research team. Taha still had an input and his views were taken seriously hence the discourse around reframing the question. Taha

did not get the outcome he desired but in this case it was important to go with the collective decision for the good of the research while ensuring Taha did not feel his ideas were undermined or undervalued. Consequently, a component of decision-making, evident through this evaluation, was around 'ideas': who had the ideas and who took control of these ideas.

A weakness with this evaluation, it could be argued, is around the framing of the questions. The third question in particular (*Give some examples of where you felt your decision or input to the decision was taken seriously*) suggests that the boys felt their input was taken seriously all the time rather than providing them with the freedom to suggest they did not necessarily feel this way. In addition I should not have asked about 'your decision' as decisions were made by the team and not by individuals. Nevertheless, R4U members were able to provide examples of where they felt their input to a decision was taken seriously and all three suggested their involvement provided them with personal gain. Kellett (2010b), in advocating child-led research, suggests that benefits are not only evident in the outcomes of the research but also in the personal development for young researchers and potential changes for other children. Moules and O'Brien (forthcoming) report that young people who commissioned their own research described a sense of achievement and a feeling of being valued during the process, as well as an in-depth understanding of research and evaluation. Percy-Smith (2009) reflects:

"For young people the benefits of participation are seen more in terms of their own personal achievement, learning and development, confidence building, being involved and feeling valued for their contribution." (Percy-Smith, 2009: 18)

This first evaluation showed that each of the boys experienced some degree of 'full involvement'. Patrick and Hanik identified times when they did not feel fully involved. In essence they were moving back and forth along the vertical line at various points of the project and for them, participation was not static but changed and moved from meeting to meeting and from task-to-task as has previously been identified by others such as Tritter and McCallum's (2006) 'mosaic' and White et al.'s (1994) 'kaleidoscope'. More recently, Moules and O'Brien (2012) conceptualised participation as fluid and moving through the process of decision-making and initiation/direction using the DMP. In evaluation two the concept of '*who had the ideas*' and how this forms part of the decision-making process was further explored using an extension of the DMP.

5.4.2 Evaluation two

The second evaluation took place at the end of cycle one (March 2011) and included all R4U members. TABLE 5.4 below presents the full R4U team.

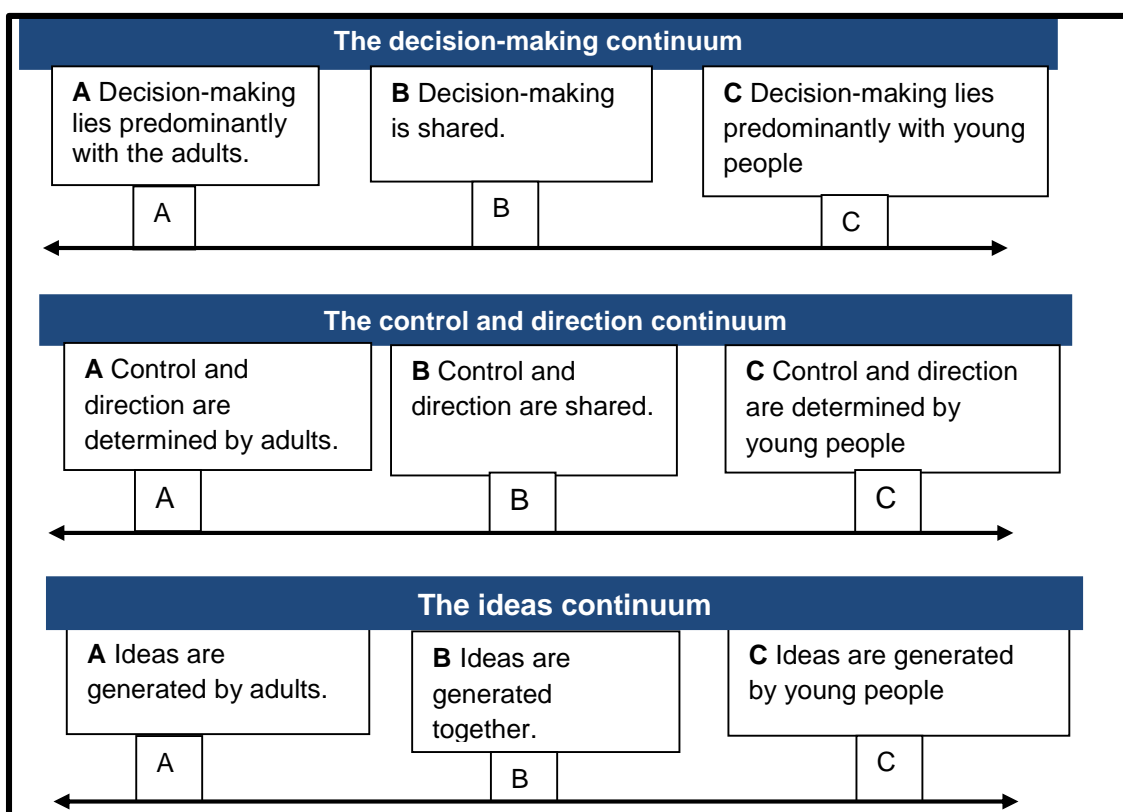
TABLE 5.4: R4U members March 2011

Name	Year	Boarder or day student
Hanik	11	Boarder
Taha	11	Day Student
Patrick	10	Day Student
Amy	9	Boarder
Hope	9	Day student

Evaluation one concluded that participation in decision-making and actions is more than just the end result. Decision-making includes a process of generating ideas, discussing the ideas and reaching a decision on what to do together. It also includes having the freedom to suggest ideas whilst being enabled to agree or disagree with others in a safe space. During cycle one, there were times when some team members were part of the whole process of decision-making while others were involved in parts of the process. The underlying principle for evaluation two therefore was to enable the young researchers to see where their contribution to decision-making was made and how this contribution impacted on the decisions.

In taking the conclusions of evaluation one into consideration I am proposing an extension to the DMP by adding a third dimension '*the ideas continuum*' as explained in FIGURE 5.3 below. I am also suggesting a change in '*initiation and direction*' to '*control and direction*'. I consider that '*initiates/controls*', as used in the DMP are separate from each other. Asking '*who initiates?*' is asking '*who had the ideas?*' while asking '*who controls?*' is asking '*who took control of the decision-making and the ideas?*'

FIGURE 5.3: Proposed third dimension to the DMP



Using the continua above, R4U were asked to 'plot' where they perceived the lead to be in *decision-making*, *control and direction* and generating *ideas* in relation to various aspects of the project. If they felt they themselves took the lead they were asked to 'plot' towards the right; if they felt I took the lead they were asked to 'plot' towards the left. If they felt the decision was 'shared' they were asked to 'plot' in the middle. To illustrate how R4U plotted, FIGURE 5.4 below is an example of how the three boys answered the first question on the questionnaire design. I have used the first initial of each of their names as follows:

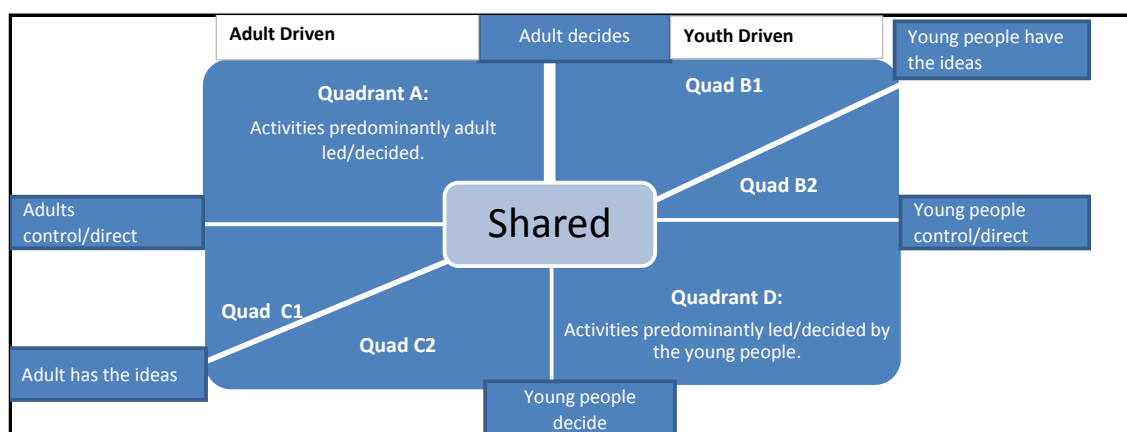
Hanik – H
Taha – T
Patrick – P

FIGURE 5.4: Designing the online questionnaire

Who made the decisions about designing the online questionnaire?				
Niamh				R4U
	X		X	X
	H		P	T
Who had the ideas about the questionnaire design?				
Niamh				R4U
	X	X		X
	H	P		T
Who controlled/directed the questionnaire design?				
Niamh				R4U
X		X	X	
T		H	P	

It is clear from FIGURE 5.4 that the team had differing views about the decisions, ideas and direction/control of the activity, which was typical for all questions asked in this second evaluation. Individual and collective interpretation of these participation activities was crucial for this project as the ethics and value base for the study acknowledges that meanings associated with participation are varied and multiple.⁴⁶ When the three lines were joined together in the middle, six types of participation were evident. FIGURE 5.5 below presents this participation.

FIGURE 5.5: Proposed extension of the DMP



In this proposed extension of the DMP the *ideas* continuum changes the dynamics of the participation and splits the participatory activity in quadrant B and C, consequently we have quadrants B1 and B2 and quadrants C1 and C2 as explained in TABLE 5.5 below.

⁴⁶ See chapter 4, section 4.4.4 for more details.

TABLE 5.5: Quadrants and splits in draft extended DMP

Quadrant	Activity		
Quadrant A	Adults control/direct the activity and make the decisions.		
Quadrant B	Young researchers have the ideas and they control/direct the activity while adults make the decisions	Quadrant B1	Young Researchers have the ideas while adults make the decisions
		Quadrant B2	Young Researchers have the ideas and they control/direct the activity
Quadrant C	Adults have the ideas and they control/direct the activity while young researchers make the decisions	Quadrant C1	Adults have the ideas and they control/direct the activity
		Quadrant C2	Adults have the ideas while young researchers make the decisions
Quadrant D	Young researchers control/direct the activity and make the decisions. They may require support from adults.		
Shared	Decision-making, ideas and control/direction are shared between the young researchers and the adult		

Utilising the proposed extension of the DMP

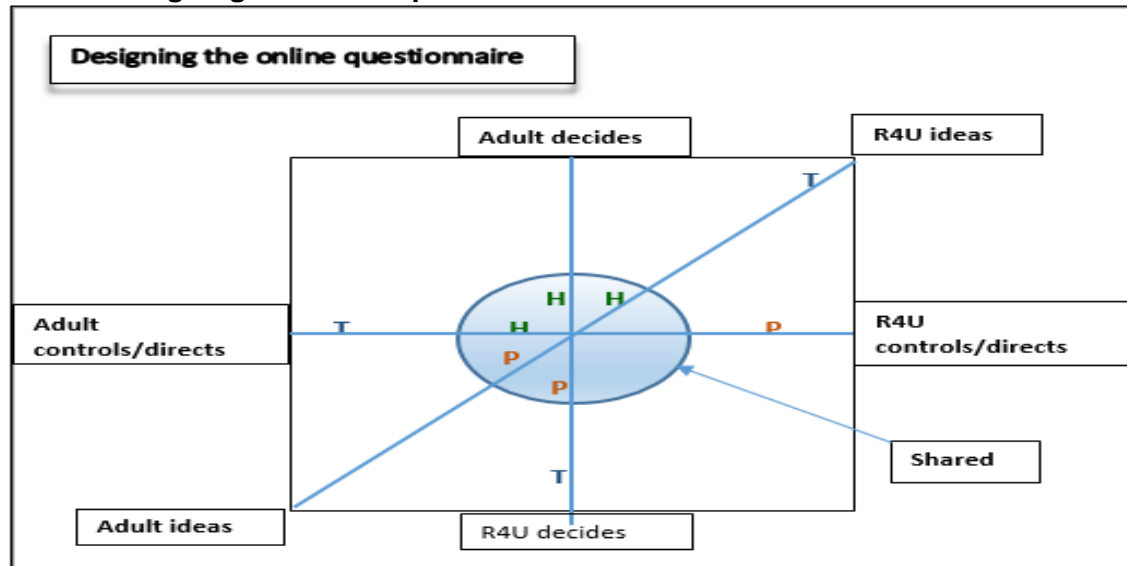
I asked R4U six questions about the process in cycle one; the three boys answered questions one to three as the girls were not part of the project at this time. Question four included Amy as she was part of the team running the focus group and questions five and six were answered by all five members of the team. All six questions asked ‘*who made the decisions?*’, ‘*who controlled/directed the activities?*’ and ‘*who had the ideas?*’ in the following areas:

- Designing the online questionnaire
- Analysing the questionnaire data
- Involvement in the focus group topic guide
- Involvement in running the focus group
- Analysis of the data from cycle one (questionnaire and focus group together)
- Deciding the topic to research for cycle two

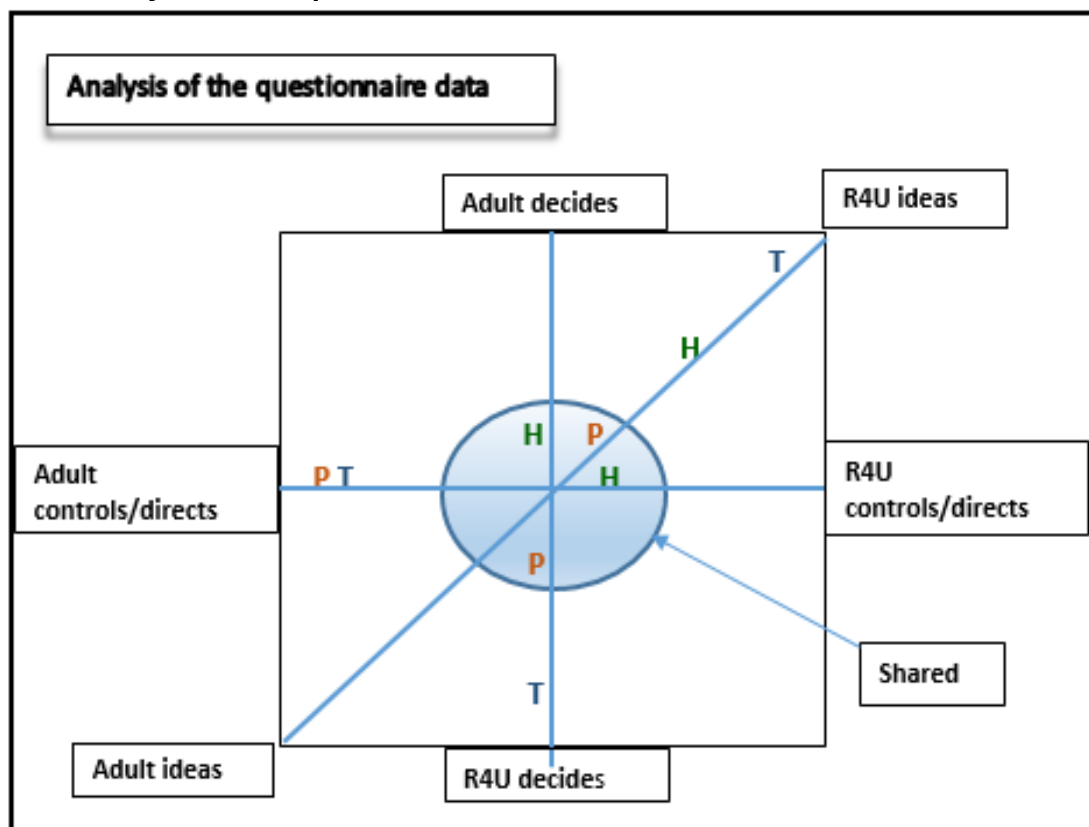
Below I present the data from R4U in terms of how they plotted their perception of participation in the project across cycle one. A discussion of the process follows the pictorial representations. I then draw conclusions from this second evaluation supported by data obtained through discourse about the process. I have used the first initial of R4U members’ names, which have been colour coded to depict where each member plotted:

Hanik - **H**
Taha - **T**
Patrick - **P**
Amy - **A**
Hope - **H**

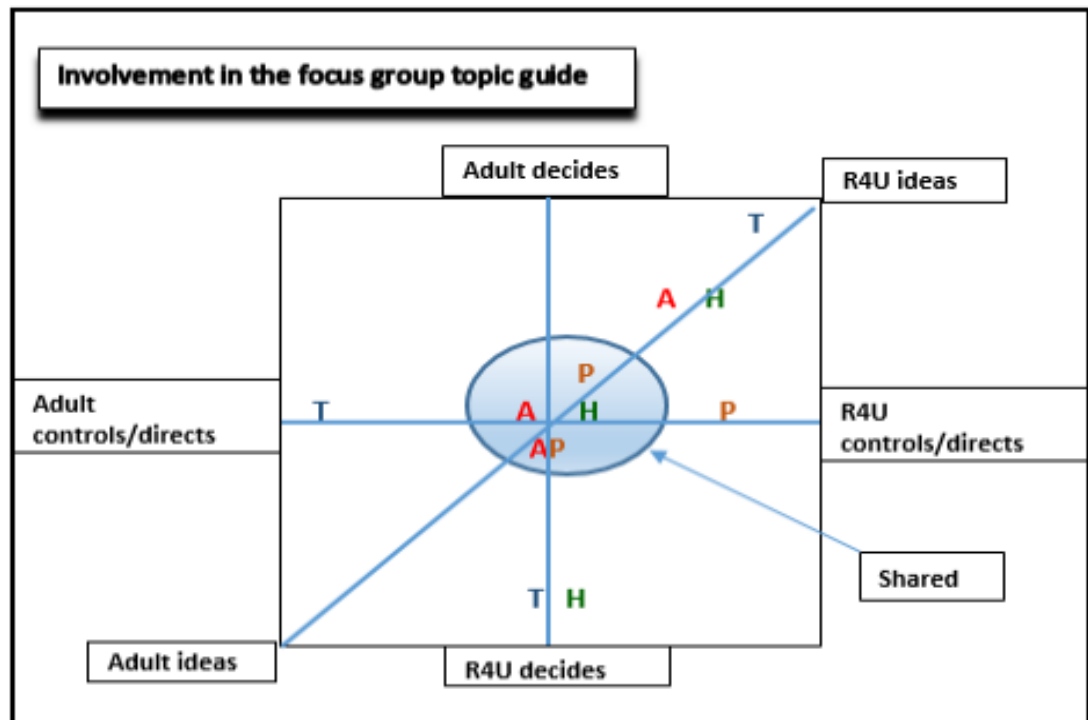
1. Designing the online questionnaire



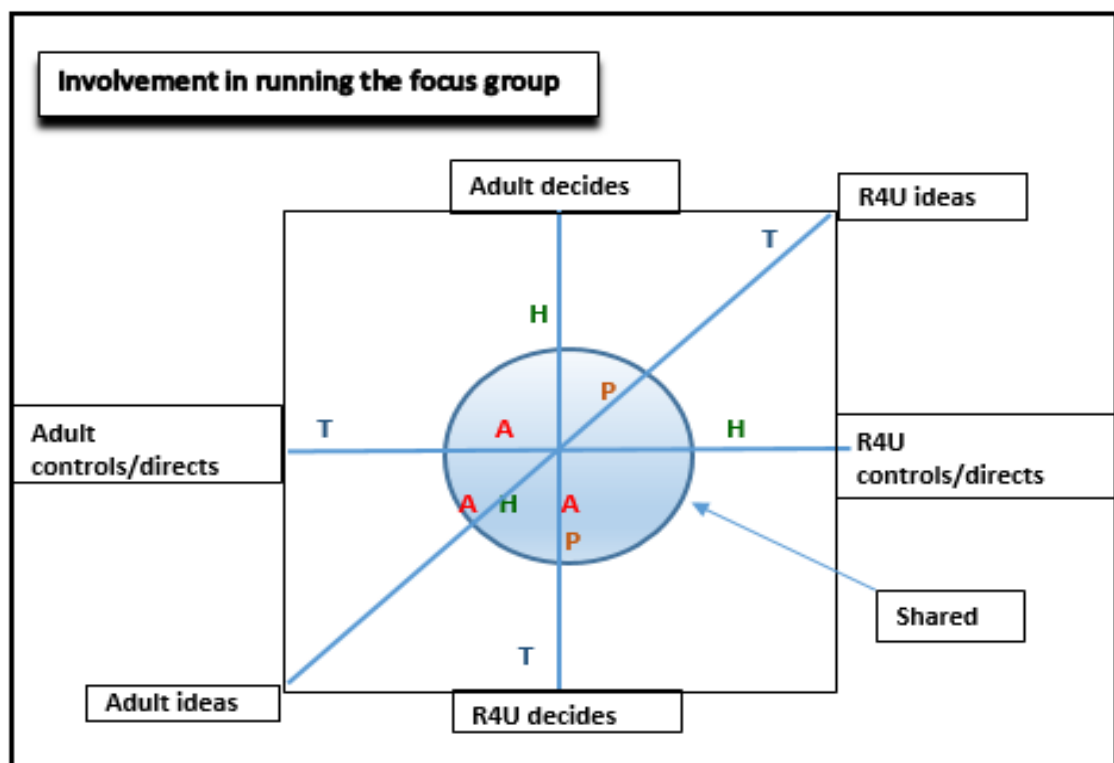
2. Analysis of the questionnaire data



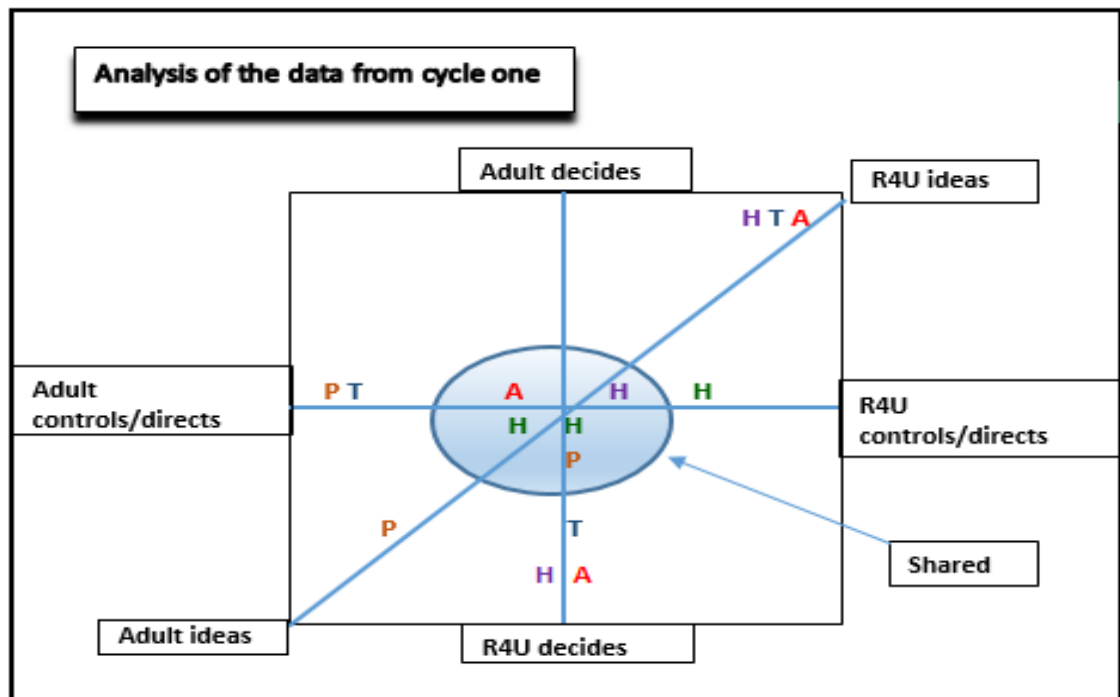
3. Involvement in the focus group topic guide



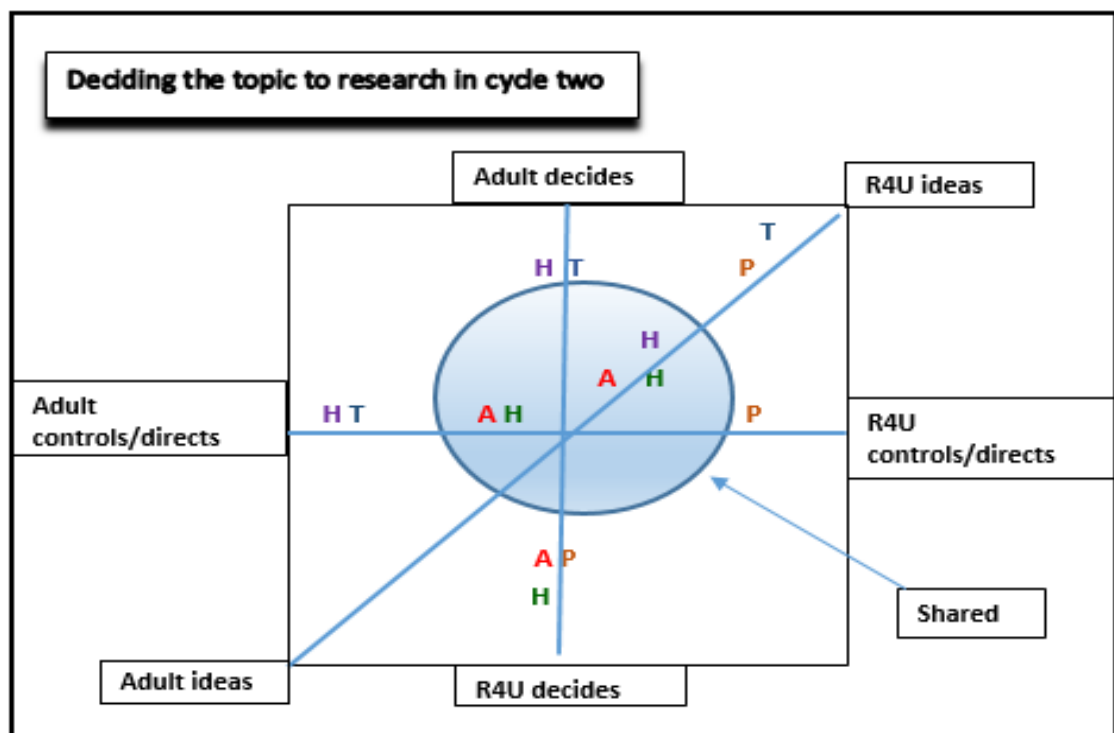
4. Involvement in running the focus group



5. Analysis of the data from cycle one (questionnaire and focus group data together)



6. Deciding the topic to research for cycle two



These pictorial representations, as well as the dialogical exchanges we had, indicated that participation was construed differently for every person. Some felt fully involved in all stages:

"I felt I had an equal influence throughout all parts." (Taha)

Taha was consistent in his interpretation of participation. For the most part he considered that decisions and ideas rested with R4U while I controlled and directed the activities. Hanik on the other hand, suggested most activities were shared between R4U, and me or led by R4U.

"Since I've been at every meeting, I understand nearly all the aspects" (Hanik)

Amy and Hope, who completed the last few questions, were similar in their thinking about participation to Hanik but felt more involved at various stages of the project:

"...how data was arranged and the focus groups and expressing my opinions"
(Hope)

"The focus group and the analysis" (Amy)

It is likely that Amy and Hope singled out specific activities they were involved in because they were not involved in the project from the outset in the way the boys were.

Patrick proposed that '*decision-making*', '*ideas*' and '*control/direction*' changed depending on the context of the activity. He provided examples of where he felt R4U made decisions such as with the questionnaire design: "*Hanik, Taha and I decided on what to do with the basic plan*" so he plotted to the right. Patrick perceived that the ideas for the analysis of the questionnaire data came from "*Niamh and Hanik*" so he plotted in the centre. There was one time when Patrick considered that "*no-one*" *controlled/directed* the involvement in running the focus group so he did not plot at all.

In the *decision-making* element of each of the six questions, these decisions were made sometimes by the adult, sometimes by R4U and sometimes together. On the *decision-making* continuum there were two questions where R4U perceived me to be the decision-maker; Hanik suggested I made the decisions on running the focus group while Taha suggested R4U made these decisions and the other members perceived this activity as shared. Although R4U were happy for me to take the lead in running this first focus group so they could use it as a training exercise, I felt that I made these decisions and R4U agreed with my decisions. It is likely that Hanik felt similarly. When we spoke about the focus group afterwards in terms of the learning and what we might do differently next time, the following comments were made:

"Bring in some activities." (Amy)

"It would be nice to do some interviews" (Hanik)

The second time I was perceived as the decision-maker was when Hope and Taha suggested I made the decisions about what to research in cycle two. I observed this decision to emerge from the data analysis and participatory process to which all team members contributed. Hanik, Patrick and Amy perceived R4U as the decision-makers here. It was always my intention to conduct two cycles of PAR at this school and there was always the possibility that R4U could decide they did not want to participate further after cycle one. There is a possibility that Hope and Taha were aware of this thus regarding me as the decision-maker. This finding raises questions about individual agendas for participation and decision-making. My own agenda was to facilitate the generation of new knowledge leading to action about bullying at this school. My other obvious intention was to produce a doctoral thesis. During the course of this study I reviewed with R4U the reasons they wanted to be involved in the research and their intentions were different to mine:

"I've learnt about the different forms of bullying. I know how to help other people now. Before I didn't know what was the right thing to say, now I know how to help them" (Amy)

"The topic really interests me and I wanted to make a difference in school" (Taha)

"It's good to learn about different research before going to university" (Hanik)

All team members agreed that the ideas about what to research were either shared or in favour of R4U. Although the topic emerged from the data, R4U were adamant they wanted to research the notion of 'the snitch' based on their own experiences as students of the school in conjunction with what was emerging from the data. The pictures depicting participation in the data analysis processes show that, although Taha and Patrick suggested that control of the analysis rested with me, the other three members perceived this control to either be in favour of R4U or shared. R4U as a collective, perceived the *decision-making* and the *ideas* to rest with them or they interpreted the process as shared. This interpretation surprised me; for our data analysis sessions I arrived with the ideas about how we would analyse the data – through using graphs from SurveyMonkey and reading the data in the 'tell us more' sections and the focus group transcript. However, although the tools were presented to the group, the interpretation of what the students were telling us came from the process of group analysis. It was clear in data analysis that R4U had a valuable contribution to make in interpreting what the students of the school were telling us. R4U had 'insider knowledge' as students of the school, either as day students or as boarders, and in our discussion as to why students might feel fearful to report bullying, they had their own ideas as to why this might be the case.

Data collected from this second evaluation provided a baseline of where R4U saw participation happening in the project at the end of cycle one. Learning from this evaluation was taken into cycle two and is highlighted in the conclusions drawn below.

Conclusions from evaluation two

The extended DMP enabled me to consider the various dimensions of participation in this project. Four conclusions are drawn from this evaluation:

- Firstly, different perceptions of participation for all team members were observed.
- Secondly I was able to appreciate the different agendas of each team member, including myself, as to why we were participating in this project.
- Thirdly, an obvious power shift occurred, not only from adult to young person but between young people.
- Lastly, the use of the extended DMP enabled dialogue about how participation was happening and how R4U were being provided with opportunities to actively contribute to the research and decision-making process.

Differing perceptions of participation

The pictures and dialogue above show that participation was construed differently for all R4U members. The ethics and value base of this study recognises that knowledge is co-constructed through human relationships and collaboration, thus no perception was wrong and each viewpoint was recognised⁴⁷. For the most part, R4U perceived that they generated *ideas* while I took *control/direction* and *decision-making* was shared. The *ideas* generated by R4U were crucial for data collection (focus group ideas) and analysis (insider knowledge), but also with regards to how the team worked together (enjoyment through games). I was perceived as taking the lead when it was necessary but through these dynamics a partnership developed where power and participation levels varied and changed all the time.

Different agendas for participating

Individual team members had various reasons for participating in this project and these reasons might have been why they interpreted the *decision-making*, *ideas* and *control/direction* differently. Sinclair (2004) refers to the work of Shier (2001) who asks adults to question their motivations for working with children in a participatory way. If the extended DMP is implemented from the outset in a participatory project, whether initiated by children or not, the pictorial representation depicted by the framework will allow

⁴⁷ Please see chapter 4, section 4.4.1 for more details.

children and adults to determine who made the *decisions*, who had the *ideas* and who *controlled/directed* the project from its inception. Reflecting and acting on this activity not only allows changes to be made based on observations but it enables everybody to see how their individual agendas impacted on their perception of *decision-making*, *ideas* and *control/direction*. Percy-Smith (2015) reiterates this point when he suggests that participation is not solely about the decisions made but it is about the sense of independence and free will people experience when they participate as part of their own agenda.

Power shift

A power shift was observed in deciding the topic for cycle two not only between me as the adult and R4U as the young researchers but also *between* the young researchers. Patrick for example, observed Hanik and Taha as being the *decision-makers* as opposed to either the adult or the young people as a collective. Sinclair (2004) acknowledges the power imbalances between children and adults in any participatory activity. Moules and O'Brien (2012) equally recognise these power relations but propose that power can be shared. Using an extension of the DMP we are able to see the multi-dimensions of power in terms of *decision-making*, *control/direction* and *ideas* in participatory research. It allows for the fact that all of the power does not rest with adults, nor does it rest with young people but that power can be shared between adults and children. Unlike the linear models, which suggest participation is fully achieved once children are leading the projects, the DMP proposes that participation is fluid and a partnership can develop between adults and children as they move through the participatory process (Moules and O'Brien, 2012).

Dialogical exchanges

The DMP enables adults to become mindful of children's involvement at various stages of the research as well as overall. It was important for this project that attention was afforded to what the students of the school were telling us through the research but also to what R4U were telling me about their perception of their own participation and the changes they would like to make. Feedback and discussions as well as the pictorial representation from the model ensured that activities around training and data collection evolved and changed during cycle two. Of particular interest to R4U was using more games in their training:

"Sometimes it's boring just doing loads of school stuff we need more activities" (Hope)

"However, I miss the games" (Taha)

Through listening to this request, games were used as learning tools for cycle two and enabled R4U to learn through fun and to participate on their own terms and not an adult-led agenda (Randall, 2012; Raffety, 2014; Percy-Smith, 2015). The use of games or arts-based approaches, argues Randall (2012), encourages adults to join children in play rather than considering methodological advantages. These approaches can add to the development of relationships and trust between adults and children (Randall, 2012).

Ideas generated through discussion with R4U also led to changes in how data for cycle two were collected. After plotting their perception of involvement with running the focus group, R4U made suggestions about changing the use of the focus group method for cycle two. Although on the whole, enjoyment was expressed about running the focus group:

“People talked and nobody overpowered, it was all equal... It corroborated with what the group had said before” (Hanik)

“It was good to express your feelings...It was nice to know others had the same views” (Hope – as a participant in the Focus Group)

They agreed that we should change this method for cycle two:

“It needs more activity and not just talking” (Amy)

“A bit too personal for a group, I knew it would be safe but still not sure.....” (Hope)

Kirby et al. (2003b) propose using various activities facilitates the inclusion of all young people with respect to diverse needs and contexts.

5.4.3 Reflections on the role of the researcher in cycle one

In the early months of this project, I perceived much of the *control* and the *ideas* to rest with me; in providing training and in ensuring all team members were happy with the process. Nonetheless, from the outset R4U were actively involved in making decisions. We made early decisions together about times and numbers of meetings as well as how we would begin to collect data.

I initiated this project so at the beginning all of the *control*, *ideas* and *ultimately* the *decision-making* were with me. This was true for the training I devised in cycle one, which carried on as the project developed. However, as the project evolved I began to notice a difference in how R4U members were participating at research meetings. They began to question the reasons behind why we were doing particular activities such as the pilot study. I explained to them the importance of trying out our questions to ensure they made

sense to others and that they were answering our research question. It was at this point that I noticed a change in power relations and how this power was beginning to move from me to R4U and then back again.

There were times when I needed to take control of the *decision-making* processes, as I needed to follow university procedures such as seeking ethical approval. Fox (2013) critiques the process of ethical approval when engaging in participatory research. Ethical guidelines, argues Fox (2013) are usually unfamiliar with the theoretical underpinnings that children are viewed as social actors and therefore rarely allow topic guides to be developed in conjunction with young researchers as the process develops. Typically, ethics panels prefer topic guides and other tools to be developed by adults prior to the research commencing (Fox, 2013). This was not my experience of receiving ethical approval. At the beginning of each cycle I applied for approval from the university ethics panel but as our tools were not fully developed I was allowed to submit them once they had been finalised and ethics approval was granted on chairs action. In cycle one, R4U were informed about the ethics process but they were equally happy for me to take the lead. In cycle two this changed somewhat as R4U had received training around ethics and therefore contributed to the process as we decided the data collection and analysis methods together. R4U equally made decisions on what the Participant Information Sheet (PIS)⁴⁸ and consent forms⁴⁹ would look like. Another time I needed to take the lead in cycle one was during the development of our research tools. I had a responsibility to ensure they were designed on time, that they met ethical standards and that our overall research questions were being addressed.

In analysing the data I was eager to ensure they were interpreted in relation to the overall research questions but allowing flexibility for questions to arise out of the data. I felt it was my role to ensure the analysis was directed in this way while taking account of any other issues that arose. I also felt I had to steer the analysis slightly to ensure confidentiality was adhered to. I perceived the *ideas* about data analysis in cycle one to be adult-led. My role in interpreting and analysing the data was to enable the team to capture what participants were telling us as a collective but also to ensure individual stories were not lost. I approached this activity as a training exercise for R4U with the intention that they would be further involved in cycle two. However R4U had different viewpoints and interpreted the ideas around analysis as predominantly shared. R4U

⁴⁸ Please see appendices 7 and 12 for the information sheets in each cycle.

⁴⁹ Please see appendix 6 for the student consent form and appendix 8 for the parent permission forms.

used their insider knowledge to interpret what the data was telling us and generated ideas during the process of analysis. However, due to my academic constraints (Fox, 2013) I decided which methods we used for analysis as well as the analytical approach. I can align aspects of my work with that of Fox (2013) who discusses her participatory research with four young people in Scotland experiencing exclusion from school. Fox (2013) states that although she used participatory methods with the young people these methods “still fell victim to the dominating forces of secondary education and academic research” (p.995). In other words, the researcher, although trying to work with young people in a participatory way, is controlling the research as a result of the constraints of the larger academic institution to which the research is a part.

I have reached the conclusion that cycle one started out with me assuming *control* of the *decision-making* process. As this cycle evolved, control and power started to shift. By the end of cycle one it was evident that R4U were playing an active role in generating *ideas* and *making decisions*. By this point our roles in the project were me as the *controller* and the young people as the *generators of ideas* with my support. We worked together to make the decisions.

5.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have provided a detailed description of the PAR process for cycle one, as well as a clear discussion on the ethics process. This chapter highlighted the full involvement of students at the school from the outset of the project. R4U members then participated throughout cycle one from deciding the day and times of our meetings to analysing data and disseminating the research findings. The complexities and ethical issues associated with the active involvement of young people in research have been acknowledged through the project process. Additionally the unique contribution the young researchers added to the process is evident throughout, such as their views on aspects of the project including the design and development of data collection tools. Their unique perspectives played a significant role in data analysis providing the crux for the research area in cycle two.

Two participation evaluations were conducted in cycle one. Evaluation one, recognised that a component in the decision-making process was around *ideas* - who had them and who took control of them. Consequently '*ideas*' was added as a proposed third dimension to the DMP (Moules and O'Brien, 2012) used in evaluation two. These cycle one evaluations highlighted the fluidity of participation in research and have shown that the active involvement of young people can change from task to task. The pictorial

representations provided by the DMP illuminates this fluidity. Furthermore, the DMP enabled me to witness the various dimensions to participation such as the different perceptions of participation of all team members, the different agendas of all team members, the ever changing power shift between the whole team and finally the DMP allowed for a dialogical exchange to take place about participation in the project.

The next chapter, chapter six, is presented in two parts; firstly the findings from cycle one are presented and secondly I present a discussion of these findings with the literature.

Chapter 6: Cycle one findings

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the findings from cycle one and a brief discussion of the key findings with reference to the research literature. A more comprehensive critical discussion of the findings across the study is presented in cycle two (chapter ten). This chapter ends with identifying the research questions for cycle two.

6.2 Exploration in cycle one

During data collection in cycle one, 93 students completed the questionnaire and three of these students participated in the focus group. The total population for the senior school was 805 pupils so 11.5% of the total student population participated in this first cycle. Two teachers and two parents completed the questionnaires; the teacher data was purely demographic but the two participating parents provided qualitative responses so parent data has been included in the analysis.

This section presents the findings from the students participating in cycle one in the form of descriptive statistics generated from the SurveyMonkey questionnaire and the in-depth inductive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) of the qualitative data derived from the questionnaires and focus group transcript. The descriptive numerical data places the qualitative data in context.

6.3 The findings from the data in cycle one

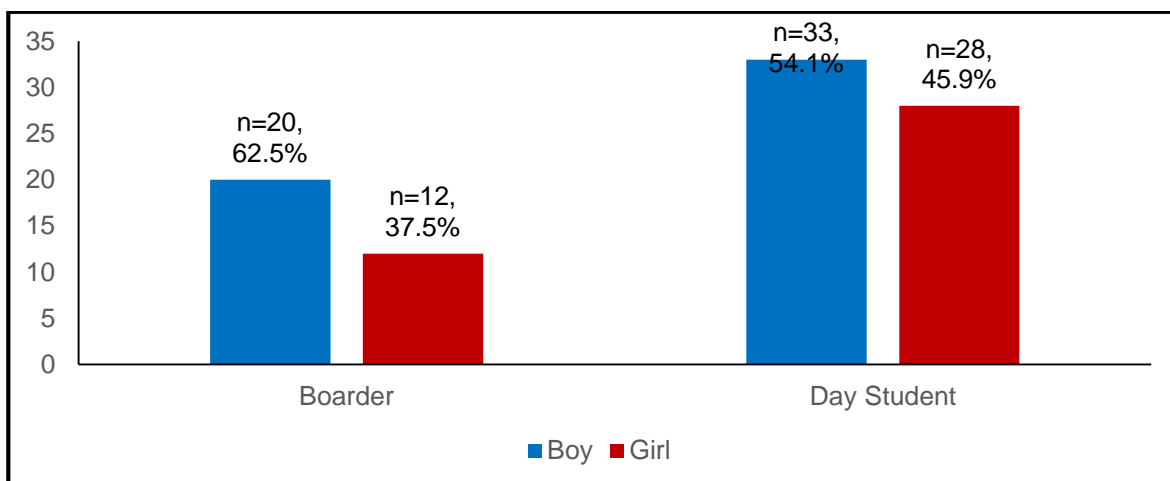
TABLE 6.1 presents the numbers of boys and girls participating in this cycle. The red text denotes the year group where the majority of boys and girls came from.

TABLE 6.1: Boys and girls year groups

Girls: Year group	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Total number
Numbers participating	0	8	10	1	5	9	7	40
Boys: Year group	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Total number
Numbers participating	2	16	14	18	0	1	2	53

Participants were asked if they were day students or boarders (FIGURE 6.1).

FIGURE 6.1: Day student or boarder



FIGURES 6.2 and 6.3 below presents the data regarding the roles students played in bullying episodes.

FIGURE 6.2: Boarders role in bullying episode

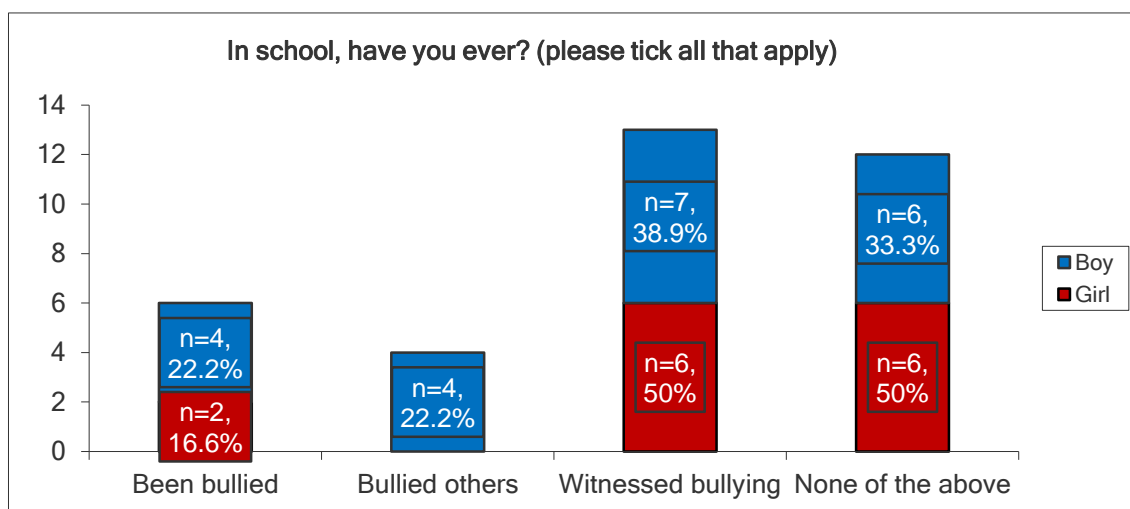
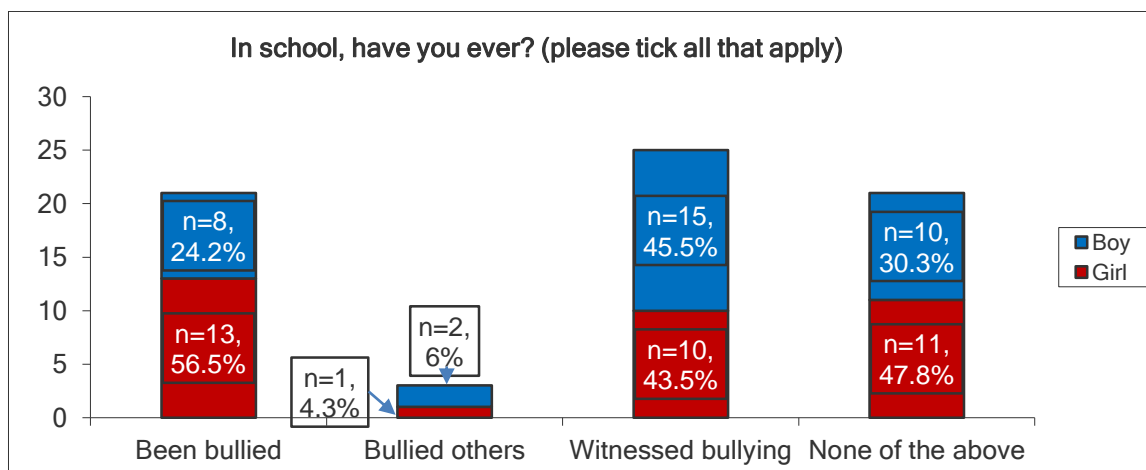


FIGURE 6.3: Day student role in bullying episode



Twelve boys identified as being bullied and within this number some boys had also bullied others or witnessed bullying: one boarder bullied others and witnessed bullying, one day student bullied others, and one day student witnessed bullying. Similar percentages of boarding boys (22.2%, n=4) and day boys (24.2%, n=8) admitted to being bullied in school.

Fifteen girls identified as being bullied and within this number some girls had also bullied others or witnessed bullying: one day student bullied others and witnessed bullying while five day students and two boarders witnessed bullying. Unlike the boys' data, differences were apparent between girls who boarded and those who did not. For girl boarders, 16.6% (n=2) admitted to being bullied while 56.5% (n=13) of girl day students admitted to being bullied.

Slightly less students overall identified as being bullied (n=27) when compared to those who had not been involved in any bullying incident (n=33). From the 17 girls not involved in any bullying incident, six were boarders, showing that 50% of the total boarding girls (n=12) in the study did not play a role in any bullying incident compared to 39.3% (n=11) of the total day girls (n=28). Of this 17, four boarding girls, admitted that despite not being involved in any bullying incident themselves, they were unhappy with the way the school deals with bullying incidents. A boarding girl from year 13 told us she was unhappy because teachers should:

"Not to take matters so seriously and make themselves more approachable"
(Response 93).

Similar percentages of male boarders (33.3%, n=6) and male day students (30.3%, n=10) said they did not play a role in any bullying incident. From these 16 boys, two boarders and one day student admitted that overall they were not happy with the way the school dealt with bullying. A boarding boy from year 10, told us that the school should have:

"Talks, Promotion activities, Bullying prefects" (Response 2)

Combining thematic and statistical analysis

The analytical process was presented in chapter five.⁵⁰ Following a rigorous analysis of the data, the three research questions for cycle one were answered. The data is presented using the first two research questions for cycle one. Questions one and two

⁵⁰ Please see section 5.2.4 for the analysis process.

provided the answers to question three and this is addressed in the discussion in section 6.4.

6.3.1 What are the views of students and parents in relation to the bullying definition set by the school?⁵¹

To address this question, participants were provided with the school definition and asked whether they agreed with it or not. If they agreed they could tick a box and if not they had the option to tell us why they did not agree. Discussion about the definition took place in the focus group. BOX 6.1 below presents *The Olive Tree School* bullying definition.

BOX 6.1: The Olive Tree School bullying definition

Bullying is when a student is repeatedly, and over a period of time, targeted by one or more students. Bullies intend to frighten, hurt, or threaten their victims. Bullying can take many forms, such as:

- Teasing or name calling
- Malicious gossip
- Racial or sexual harassment
- Isolating a student from a friendship group
- Damaging or stealing property
- Hitting, punching and other physical abuse

Bullies can use a range of methods and these include face-to-face, mobile phones, email, instant messaging or Internet message boards.

The two participating parents agreed with the definition while, 90.2% (n=83) of students agreed with it, a 9.8% (n=9) did not agree (one boy skipped this question). Four male students (day students) and five female students (two day students and three boarders) did not agree with the bullying definition. Reasons for disagreement varied:

- Three girls, all boarders with two from year nine and one from year 11, suggested that isolating a student from a friendship group should not be included in the definition.
- Three students suggested that the adults in the school needed a firmer approach when dealing with bullying:

"I think schools should be more strict" (Response 68, year 8, female, day student)

- Three students suggested that the definition needed to be made more explicit and include different aspects of bullying:

"I think that mental bullying is a mayor aspect and is necessary to incorporate within your 'forms of bullying'." (Response 24, year 9, female, day student).

⁵¹ Due to the lack of staff involvement the research questions for cycle one focuses on students and parent involvement only.

Although the majority of students agreed with the bullying definition, many suggested that it was too inclusive and did not allow further context to be taken into consideration before a judgement could be made as to whether a situation was bullying. One student who agreed with the definition said:

“yes, it is to inclusive it includes too much things about everything because teachers sometimes just hear things out of context so people who did not actually do something wrong get dealt with seriously” (Response 16, year 8, male, day student).

This contradicts the views of some students who disagreed with the definition because they wanted further clarification on some issues. These disagreements are considered in the analysis below.

Constant refining of the data in the latent stage of the analysis allowed me to identify three themes that represented the views of the students about the bullying definition imposed upon them:

- Awareness
- Context
- Isolation

Awareness

John, a year nine day student participated in the focus group and shared with us his personal experiences of being bullied. His opinion of the school definition was:

“I think you’ve got everything right there but sometimes they might not know that they’re bullying.”

Students who disagreed with the definition suggested that it needed to be more elaborate in some areas such as cyber-bullying and emotional abuse. Students were not always aware that they were potentially contributing to a bullying incident at school. John conveyed the following story of how a bullying situation was able to take place while the perpetrators were not aware of what they were doing:

John: *“Boarders – like foreign boarders didn’t know and were told to say things and they didn’t know, like laughing at me, taking the mickey out of what I looked like and things. Like they didn’t understand that it was the wrong thing to say cos they didn’t understand English.”*

Niamh: *“OK so somebody trying to get somebody else on their side to bully other people?”*

John: *“Yeah but not realising it’s probably bullying”*

Niamh: *“OK so those people doing that - would you have seen those as the bullies or would you have seen the people telling them to do it as the bullies?”*

John: *“The people telling them to do it as the bullies.”*

Some students in the questionnaire told us that once they had reported the situation, the

bully was made aware of how their actions had impacted upon the victim. The bully was able to view the situation from the perspective of the victim and the bullying stopped:

“...the bullying stopped and that the bullies started to be kinder to me.”
(Response 55, year 8, male, day student)

“I was happy that the student was not punished severely but they appreciated how I felt etc.” (Response 24, year 9, female, day student).

John said that once the bullies were able to realise the stress they were causing him the bullying reduced:

John: *“Yeah like the levels of stress – well that’s what the doctor said that the stress brought that on. I think the bullies knew that and thought ‘Oh we’ve really gone over the top’ They started to make more sure I was like OK so they went from one end of the scale to the other.”*

Several students, whether they agreed with the school’s definition of bullying or not, felt:

“The school should discuss the situation with the people involved before taking any actions” (Response 77, year 11, female, day student).

The data suggests that students would welcome ‘perspective’ in this definition. ‘Intention’ from the viewpoint of the perpetrator is realised to a certain degree in the definition, but ‘perspective’ from the viewpoint of the victim is not considered. In the focus group, it was suggested that bullying happens when it is perceived as bullying by the victim regardless of the definition in place. All participants agreed with this but equally they suggested that further evidence needs to be gathered so as not to allow a victim to be further exposed to bullying:

Simon: *“So I think you have to have a sort of cut-off where you should be able to decide....not using the victim’s opinions as much so you can sort of rule out them toning it down out of fear.”*

Niamh: *“Out of fear of reporting it or...?”*

Simon: *“Out of fear of the bullies taking revenge or something. So I just think you can’t rely entirely on what the victim says cos they might actually make it sound worse like they have a bit of a grudge or something or might make it sound not as bad out of fear.”*

Context

Additional comments from students focussed on whether teachers were able to make the distinction between a bullying and a playful incident. Students felt additional contextual information was needed in some cases:

“I feel that [school] should try to find out about situations in depth and not jump to conclusions”. (Response 81, year 11, female, boarder)

“I think they take it a bit too seriously sometimes it is just friends messing around” (Response 16, year 8, male, day student)

Students across the dataset spoke about context in one way or another. In the

questionnaire students suggested that teachers needed to find out more about a situation before they could decide if bullying has taken place. A male day student from year 8 told us:

“They need to make better judgement over things like jokes, where things could be seen as racist by one person and actually both people are aware that it is a joke.” (Response 17)

Focus group participants said that they would need more information before they could decide if bullying had taken place. In a conversation about why somebody might not report a bullying situation John and Simon said:

John: *“If I caught my friend being sworn at I don’t think I would do anything cos that’s only half the story. He could have done something completely out of order before.”*

Simon: *“But also you don’t know all the time that it’s bullying. I think it’s difficult to get a definition of bullying if you’re watching something cos you don’t know the context so it might not be serious or it might be a retaliation.”*

Although some felt that the definition was cumbersome and long-winded, they did not disagree with it but felt teachers could be more proactive in finding out more about a situation from everybody involved, before conclusions were reached and action taken. A year 13 female day student told us about her experience of reporting bullying in school:

“...teachers acted without telling us what they were going to do, ended up being excluded more.” (Response 89).

Students wanted their teachers to recognise the behaviour, within context, that they believed bullying to be and act appropriately in terms of punishment and retribution:

“Bullying hurts people’s feelings and therefore is always wrong. I’ve never seen someone to deal with it! Someone needs to take responsibility (in actions not only words because they don’t really work in this school)” (Response 77, year 11, female, boarder).

Although the school definition defines a plethora of bullying behaviours, some students felt that within the context of the whole situation, teachers needed to take note of the bullying definition and “enforce it” (Response 27, year 9, male, day student).

Isolation

Only one phrase from the bullying definition was disputed across the dataset: “Isolating a student from a friendship group”. For some students, more clarity was needed, as many did not believe that this behaviour was always bullying. Girls in the questionnaire who disagreed with the statement suggested:

“Isolating a student from a friendship group – I believe there are various reasons for which a student can be isolated from a group – including by choice.” (Response 81, year 11, female, boarder).

A year 13 male boarder, who admitted to bullying others and witnessing bullying, suggested that exclusion from a friendship group is not considered to be serious bullying and could be dealt with more effectively:

“Perhaps, as being in year 13, I do not personally witness awful a lot of bullying, but I can imagine that the problem may be more serious in lower years. Here I am not talking about serious physical or sexual abuse, but perhaps little things such as excluding some people from social circles, not allowing them to play sports, not integrating them... And I think this could and should be dealt with better.” (Response 9)

In the focus group, four vignettes, each presenting a social situation between students in school, were used as discussion prompts to ascertain whether bullying had taken place.⁵² One particular vignette explored the concept of isolation (BOX 6.2). The following scenario was provided and participants were asked whether or not bullying had taken place:

BOX 6.2: Isolation vignette

Adam and José are both in year nine and have been best friends since primary school. One day a new boy called Eric joins their class and wants to be friends with Adam and José but they have no interest in being friends with Eric so deliberately go out of their way to avoid him.

The concept of “*the whole new kid thing*” (John) was discussed and the notion of not judging people before getting to know them. Simon summed it up for the group:

“..... there is avoiding, as in, not actively playing a role in trying to be friends which I don’t really see as bullying I see this as just not getting someone to join your friendship group. Whereas if you were actually leaving him out and rejecting him if he tries to be friends then I think I would see that as malicious and bullying.”

The data shows that although the majority of students agreed with the definition many considered it long-winded and not context specific. This finding raises questions about who proposes and imposes school bullying definitions and policies versus who is expected to abide by them. The only statement in the definition contested across the dataset was around isolation from a friendship group where it has been suggested that some students like to congregate and socialise in their own groups but do not always want to welcome newer people. This raises questions around language used in the bullying definition and how adults and students of the school perceive this language.

⁵² Please see chapter 5, section 5.2.3 and appendix 9 for more details on the four vignettes

6.3.2 What are the views of students and parents in relation to how satisfied they are with the way in which the school deals with bullying incidents?

This question was explored by asking participants their perception of reporting bullying in school. If they had reported bullying we asked them how satisfied they were with how the situation was dealt with and if they did not report the bullying we asked why they had not reported it. We also asked the participants about any recommendations they would make to improve how bullying is dealt with in school and asked them to tell us anything else they felt was relevant. Two specific discussion points were identified under this research question:

- Reporting bullying in school
- Bullying experiences

Reporting bullying in school

Thirty-three participating students (35.5%) told us that they had not played a role in any bullying incident (21 day students and 12 boarders see FIGURES 6.2 and 6.3). Fifty-eight students (62.4%) admitted to being bullied, bullying others and/or witnessing bullying (40 day students and 18 boarders). Two boarders did not tell us their roles. Of this 58, 41.4% (n=24) reported the incident while 56.9% (n=33) did not and one student did not tell us if they reported bullying. Both parents reported that their children had been bullied in the school and they themselves reported the incident to teachers.

Reporting bullying

Twenty-four students told us that they had reported a bullying situation: nine boys (17% of all boys) and 15 girls (37.5% of all girls). The role(s) these students admitted to playing in a bullying episode, as well as their status as day or boarding students, are presented in FIGURES 6.4 and 6.5 below:

FIGURE 6.4: Boys who reported a bullying incident

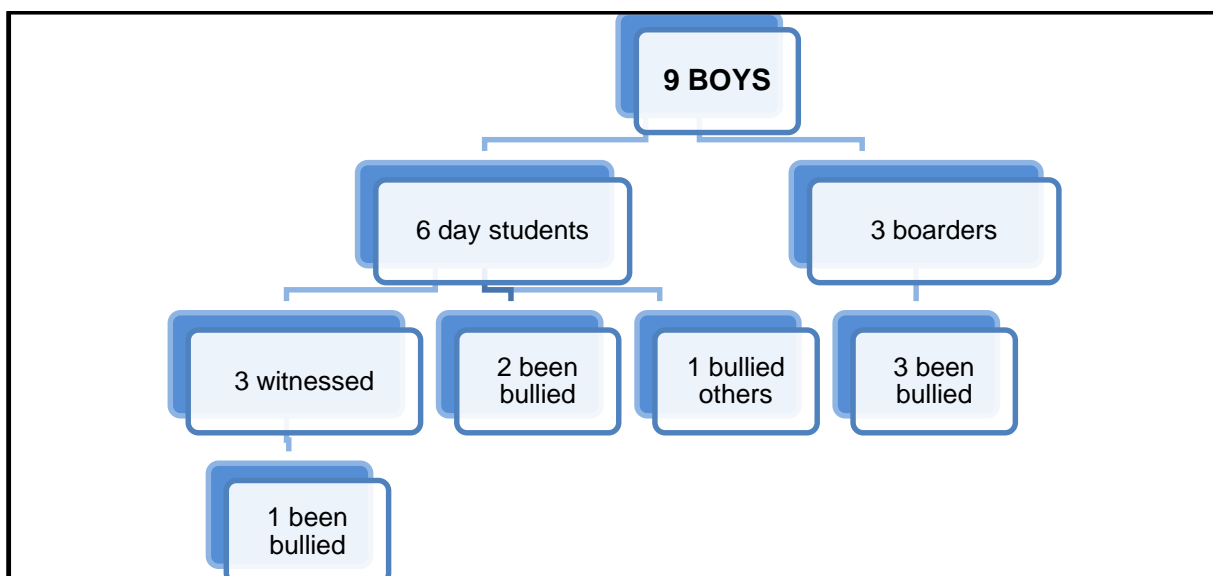


FIGURE 6.5: Girls who reported a bullying incident

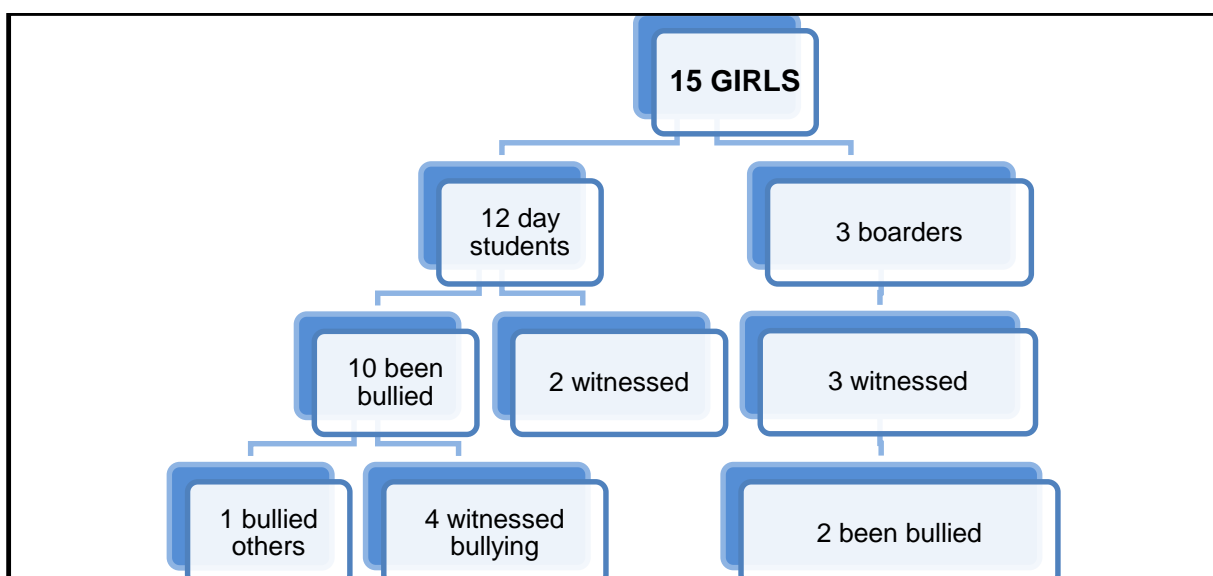


TABLE 6.2: Students happy with outcome after reporting a bullying incident

	Boarders	Day students	Total
Boys	3	4	7
Girls	1	7	8
Total	4	11	15

Students were happy that they had reported bullying for two reasons. Firstly, the bullying ended and was promptly dealt with:

“Everything was sorted out.” (Response 14, year 8, male, boarder).

“It was sorted and I didn’t have to worry about it again” (Response 74, year

9, female, day student)

Secondly, students felt listened to and felt a sense of satisfaction that their complaint had been taken seriously and the situation was handled appropriately.

“It was dealt with in the appropriate manor and when they continued to ignore the rules one was expelled” (Response 11, year 10, male, day student).

“I was happy that the student was not punished severely but they appreciated how I felt etc.” (Response 24, year 9, female, day student)

Furthermore one student who witnessed bullying and reported it to a teacher was happy he reported it because:

“...i had made someone else’s life, stress free from any future bullying” (Response 56, year 8, male, day student).

One participating parent said she was happy with the outcome after reporting the bullying but did not expand on this further.

TABLE 6.3: Students unhappy with outcome after reporting a bullying incident

	Boarders	Day students	Total
Boys	0	2	2
Girls	2	5	7
Total	2	7	9

Some students told us that the bullying was made worse after reporting it. A female day student in year eight who had been bullied and witnessed bullying reported the situation to a teacher, family member and head of year. She told us:

“The girl that was doing the bullying did not get any punishments for the things that she had done. The Teacher said to the girl that she must apologise, but to this day she never did say sorry.” (Response 64, year 8, female, day student).

A female boarder from year eleven told us her situation was made worse after reporting bullying because *“Bullies knew they had been reported”* (Response 80). This girl had been bullied and witnessed bullying; she reported it to a teacher and a family member. Another female boarder from year ten who had been bullied and witnessed bullying reported the bullying to a teacher and family member and told us that she *“lost friends because of it”* (Response 13).

Other reasons students were not happy about the outcome of reporting bullying was because they felt their complaint was not taken seriously either by the perpetrator or the teacher who the incident had been reported to. A year eight female day student who had

been bullied and reported the situation to a teacher told us:

"I picked no because the bully didn't admit to the incident and only admitted it halfly. She didn't get any punishments, she didn't apologise and didn't think of understanding how I felt." (Response 66)

while a male day student from year ten who had witnessed bullying and reported it to a teacher said:

"They didn't see the punishment through to the end" (Response 10)

This notion of nothing happening as a result of reporting the bullying was also highlighted by a parent:

"I would have liked to have seen more of the group involved have their parents informed. This child got several older girls to harass my daughter and they tried to spin a tale to the head of year that just was not true. My daughter is in year 7 and this was a very upsetting episode in her first year. The older girls should have been made to face more of a punishment."

Eighteen day students (20.1% - six boys and twelve girls) and six boarders (33.3% - three boys and three girls) told us they reported bullying⁵³. Of this 24, 75% (n=18) told a teacher, including 100% (n=6) of reporting boarders, and 66.6% (n=12) of reporting day students day.

We explored the concept of reporting bullying to a teacher further in the focus group:

John: *"I went to my form tutor"*

Niamh: *"And was that helpful?"*

John: *"That helped me cos it got the weight off my chest really. So I knew it was with someone so it could be fixed and then eventually it went up cos of how serious it got to head of year and that was it really."*

Focus group participants suggested that other students would report bullying to a teacher because teachers have the power to resolve the situation:

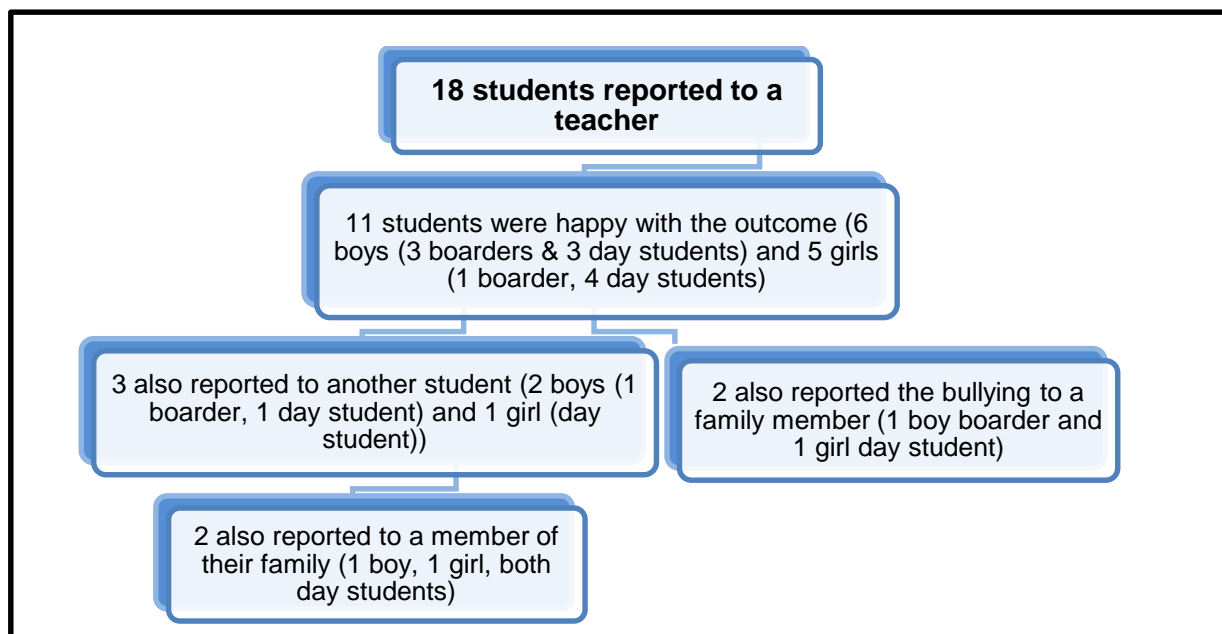
Hope: *"I would tell head of year or a teacher I like, cos they might like, report it to another teacher."*

Simon: *"I haven't ever had any experience of being bullied but I think I would choose quite objectively who I would tell because sometimes I think a form tutor, they might be a bit too close to the actual bullying to – you know - they might cause some damage unwittingly. So I would probably want to go to head of year or someone a bit higher who might be a bit more removed from the bullying so they could do something about it a bit more objectively."*

⁵³ Please see FIGURE 6.4 and FIGURE 6.5 for details of those students who reported bullying.

FIGURE 6.6 below shows that of the 18 students who chose to confide in a teacher, 11 (61.1%) were happy with the outcome of their complaint. FIGURE 6.6 also shows the other people these 11 students chose to confide in along with a teacher.

FIGURE 6.6: Teachers and other supportive people



Although most students who confided in a teacher, were happy with the outcome of their complaint ($n=11$), almost half of them 45.5% ($n=5$) also confided in another person. Furthermore of the total population confiding in a teacher, over a third (38.9%, $n=7$) were not happy with the outcome of their complaint. Caution must be applied as these findings do not indicate that teachers were primarily sought out by students who wanted to report bullying, rather these findings suggest that teachers are one group of people that students chose to confide in about bullying.

Twelve students (50%) confided in a member of their family (eight girls (six day students, two boarders) and four boys (three day students and one boarder). Eight of these (66.7%) (six girls (four day students, two boarders) and two boys (one day student and one boarder) also chose to tell a teacher, while 16.7% ($n=2$) chose to tell a friend (one boy, one girl, both day students). However, in the focus group discussion, students did not view their parents to be as powerful as teachers in resolving bullying issues, likening them to their friends:

Hope: *“Well it’s like talking to your parents isn’t it? Cos you know that they can’t do anything but you still talk to them.”*

John: *"Just to get it off your mind so you can relax more. I mean I had a few mates that I could talk to but it kind of helped it's just someone to chat with"*

No student reported bullying to a member of *Blossom* – the school's student support group. This notion was further explored in the focus group where students told us that it could be embarrassing for some students to go to *Blossom*. Simon said:

"I think, from what I sort of gain from reputation and feeling, it seems almost like a defeat to have to go to Blossom. It makes it seem like that is a last resort almost. Sort of admitting you can't find a solution yourself." (Simon)

Focus group participants did not welcome the idea of peer support and did not feel that students would have the same discretion as teachers:

Hope: *"Well it's like they're students too so if I told them then they'll spread it"*

Simon: *"I think also as much as some people like to get away from the fact, Blossom is sixth formers and for people like me, Hanik and Taha it's the equivalent of talking to the people in the year above about problems. Whereas teachers they have a sort of definite power, otherwise it is just chatting to sixth formers who are still students and don't seem to be able to do anything about it. It's more talking to someone which you could do with friends who you would know better and trust more probably."*

Of the nine students who were unhappy about how their bullying complaint had been handled (see TABLE 6.3), seven (77.8%) chose to tell a teacher. Of those seven (six girls - four day students, two boarders, and one boy - day student), four (57.1%) chose to also tell a member of their family (all girls - two day students, two boarders).

Although most of the students who reported bullying were happy with the outcome many were not. For those who were happy, the bullying ceased and the perpetrator understood how the victim felt. Students were happy that the school had responded appropriately to their complaint in a timely manner. For other students this was not the case and some felt the situation was made worse as a result of reporting the incident. No students reported bullying to *Blossom* and data collected in this cycle indicated that students viewed *Blossom* members as unable to do anything about a bullying situation. In the focus group Simon suggested students might prefer to confide in their friends rather than a member of *Blossom* but this was not reflected in the quantitative data where the numbers reporting to their friends were low (12.5%, n=3). In addition, students admitted that they would be embarrassed to go to *Blossom*, choosing instead to report the incident to an adult. The reasons students chose not to report bullying are presented next.

Not reporting bullying

Students did not report bullying at *The Olive Tree School* because they:

- Witnessed bullying and did not want to get involved,
- Were fearful of retaliation on the part of the bully or of being labelled as a 'snitch',
- The bullying was perceived as not serious enough.

TABLE 6.4: Numbers not reporting a bullying situation

	Boarders	Day students	Total
Boys	9	16	25
Girls	3	5	8
Total	12	21	33

The data shows that boys reported bullying less than girls with 45% of male boarders (n=9) and 48.5% of male day students (n=16) not reporting bullying compared to 25% of female boarders (n=3) and 17.6% (n=5) of female day students not reporting bullying. In order to explore the reasons why students chose not to report bullying we analysed this data in relation to the role they admitted to playing in a bullying incident, this is explained in FIGURES 6.7 and 6.8 below.

FIGURE 6.7: Boys not reporting bullying and role in the incident

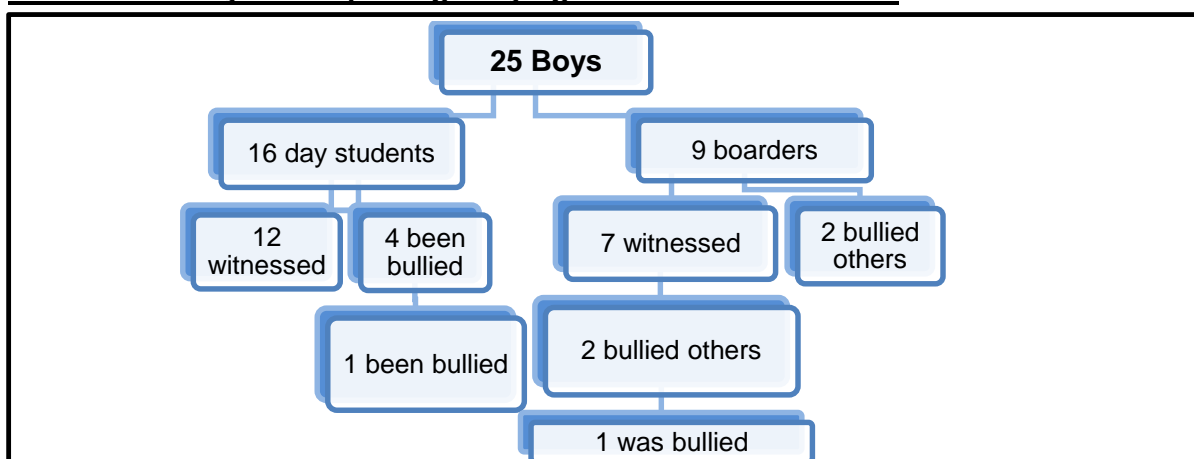
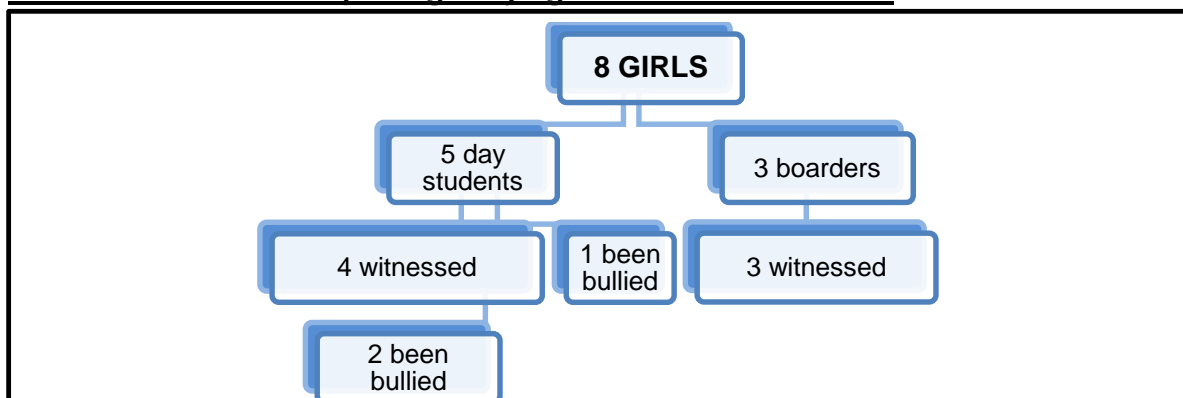


FIGURE 6.8: Girls not reporting bullying and role in the incident



Witnessing bullying

Most students who did not report bullying had witnessed a bullying incident. One of the reasons students did not report this bullying was because they did not feel it was their place to report it:

“Because it was nothing to do with me, so I kept out of it.” (Response 1, year 8, male, day student).

Similar reasons were echoed throughout the data such as the following quote from a year 12 girl (day student) who had witnessed bullying:

“I didn’t feel it was necessary for me to get involved” (Response 82)

In the focus group ‘not reporting bullying’ by those who witnessed the situation was further discussed:

Niamh: *“What about people who witness bullying? Why don’t they report it?”*

Hope: *“Well you don’t want to get involved do you? So say if I saw my friend hurting someone else and they went into [teacher’s] office I wouldn’t really want to be in there with them cos I had nothing to do with it I just saw it.”*

Some students said they did not report the bullying they had witnessed because:

“Somebody else did” (Response 35, year 9, male, boarder).

“Someone else reported the bullying and the school sorted it out.” (Response 83, year 12, female, day student).

Some students, stating that they did not want to interfere in a situation that did not involve them, suggested that they were fearful of the possible repercussions associated with reporting bullying in school. The theme of ‘fear’ in a bullying situation resonated throughout the data as a reason for non-reporting.

Fear of reporting bullying

Fear was highlighted as a reason why students did not report bullying; fear of retaliation and fear of being labelled as a ‘snitch’⁵⁴. A 14-year-old boy (boarder) in year nine said that he did not report the bullying:

“Cos I didn’t want to take it any further...” (Response 36)

This student had been bullied, bullied others and witnessed bullying and he did not report it to anyone. Fear around reporting the bullying resonated throughout the data; one boy did not report the bullying he had experienced:

“Because I was scared” (Response 22, year 10, male, day student)

Another boy who had been bullied did not report the situation:

⁵⁴ The term ‘snitch’ came from the data. It also featured in team discourse to refer to somebody who reports another student for bullying.

"Because [name of student] will hit me" (Response 27, year 9, male, day student)

In the focus group, John suggested that the reason a student who was bullied would not report the bullying was because:

John: *"They might be terrified – so out of fear. The bully might see them reporting it and come after them and sort of he knows what's happened."*

Hope: *"So if you went to your head of year and asked them if they can speak to this person then the head of year might say like 'Hope has some trouble with you' and then once they get out they'll be all 'why the hell did she say that about me' and you'll be really embarrassed that you reported it because you don't really want to face them."*

Simon reiterated this stating that students would have *".... a genuine fear of what the bully will do"*. The concept of being fearful supported the notion that students did not want to be known as a 'snitch' around the school:

"I didn't want to be known as a snitch" (Response 54, year 8, male, day student)

"Because you will be named a snitch" (Response 5, year 7, male, boarder)

A girl from year 11 did not report bullying she witnessed:

".....if someone reports it then this person becomes the new for bullying" (Response 77, year 11, female, boarder)

Bullying not serious enough

Many students told us that they did not report a bullying situation because they did not think the bullying was serious enough; this was particularly true of the boys' data where a plethora of such comments were provided. Fewer boys than girls reported a bullying incident and the fact that they did not see the situation as serious enough might have been the reason for non-reporting:

"...it was not a big deal and i thought the situation could be resolved among us boys" (Response 12, year 10, male, boarder)

"It was not serious enough" (Response 47, year 10, male, day student)

In ascertaining the views of students about how satisfied they were with the way in which the school deals with bullying incidents a number of issues emerged. Most students reporting bullying were happy that the bullying had been dealt with in a timely manner and the perpetrator understood the viewpoint of the victim in some cases. Other students however, were not happy with the way the situation had been resolved and some felt the situation had been made worse by reporting it. Over a third (n=33) of students chose not to report the bullying at all with the majority witnessing bullying at school. For many students a fear was associated with reporting bullying. This fear was linked to possible

retaliation by the perpetrator and also the fear of being labelled as 'a snitch' in school. Overall this data shows that students were not happy to report bullying in school.

Bullying experiences

The final pattern to emerge from the data was related to the bullying experiences of individual students. We did not ask students to tell us about these experiences in the questionnaire but through other questions such as '*Is there anything else you would like to tell us about bullying at The Olive Tree School?*'; '*Overall are you happy with the way The Olive Tree School deals with bullying?*' stories from the students emerged. This pattern runs as a thread in answering the second research question in relation to how satisfied the school community are with the way the school deals with bullying incidents. This pattern focuses on the discourse of the lived experiences of the students. Two themes emerged:

- Resolving bullying alone
- Teacher's reactions to bullying

Resolving bullying alone

Some students were left with no option but to try and resolve the bullying themselves for two reasons:

- They were unaware who they could report the bullying to
- They had no trust in the system

They were unaware who they could report the bullying to

Some students did not report a bullying incident, as they were pessimistic about the end result. Two female day students said there was "*no point*" (Response 85, year 12, and response 59, year 13) in reporting the bullying at school. Some boarders told us they did not report bullying they had witnessed or been a victim of because they did not know whom they could report it to:

"Didn't know who to" (Response 86, year 12, girl, boarder)

"Because didn't know whom to tell to" (Response 44, year 10, boy, boarder)

They had no trust in the system

John was forthcoming about his own experience of name-calling and ridiculing in school:

John: *"I mean the bullying lasted a lot longer than it took to get it sorted out. I just put up with it for a while but it got to the stage where I was trying to skip school, I was scared of coming in and things like that and that's when it kind of got to the point where I had to tell because it was affecting my learning and things.....When I reported it, it was too early on cos there wasn't like*

enough evidence to fall on. But it drove me like I was under so much stress. I was getting headaches and it led to me having epilepsy”.

John described a dilemma he was faced with around whether or not to tell somebody about the bullying he was experiencing. Even when he did report it he did not have sufficient evidence to support his complaint so no action was taken.

Indeed Simon suggested that students would rather resolve bullying alone than go to *Blossom* for support:

“I think, from what I sort of gain from reputation and feeling, it seems almost like a defeat to have to go to Blossom. It makes it seem like that is a last resort almost. Sort of admitting you can’t find a solution yourself.”

Teacher's reactions to bullying

The overall perspective of the students was that teachers conceptualised bullying differently from them. Some girls in the questionnaire data, revealed their frustration about how a situation of bullying can be made worse when a teacher intervenes. The following quote was provided by a female boarder in year nine who had had a disagreement with another student:

“I think that [The Olive Tree School] is sometimes too quick to catch bullying, and what they catch isn't actually bullying at all. For example last year my friends and I had a disagreement with one of our other friends over the weekend, but on Monday morning we sorted it all out and apologised, and everything was fine again. However, our Head of Year called us in to her office to say that we were bullying our friend, even though she didn't think we did, we didn't think we did, we didn't mean to or want to, and we apologised that morning for being rude. But the school had hacked into our Facebook pages and used this as evidence, but she had mis-read it all. We had forgotten and moved on but they insisted on bringing it back up and upsetting us about it.”

(Response 61)

Although issues of cyber-bullying are the potential concern in this case, the student did not feel that her perspective had been taken into account. She insinuates in this quote that teachers intervened without consulting the students involved. This blanket approach to handling bullying was not welcomed by the students and was raised by another female boarder from year eleven. This student had been bullied and witnessed bullying and she reported the situation to a teacher and a family member:

“Cases should be dealt with based on individual circumstances. Also all teachers should take it seriously.”

(Response 80).

The individual and collective experiences of bullying at *The Olive Tree School*, from those students who chose to share their experiences with us, is that students were reluctant to report bullying as they were unsure about how their complaint would be

received and how they could access support. Furthermore, how teachers reacted and dealt with bullying situations could have been a barrier to reporting the issue.

6.4 Discussion from cycle one

This section draws together the key findings from cycle one as presented in this chapter and discusses them with the relevant literature reviewed in chapters two and three. The aim of this study was to identify what the students of *The Olive Tree School* considered the core bullying issue to be and for the research team to work together to address this issue. The first cycle was therefore exploratory, and primarily about establishing the research team and generating data through the involvement of students, teachers and parents. In presenting this discussion I use the cycle one research questions as a guide.

6.4.1 What are the views of students and parents in relation to the bullying definition set by the school?

The bullying definition used in this study was the definition set by the school. Students were not involved in setting this definition so it is not surprising that some discrepancies in perspectives existed in terms of the definition of bullying. The two participating parents agreed with the definition and although students did not dispute some aggressive behaviours (physical and verbal abuses) as being bullying the analysis showed that they focussed on the dynamics of the bullying situation and the context in which it occurred rather than physical and verbal aggression per se. This finding supports the work of Schott and Sondergaard (2014) who propose a new paradigm in bullying research. Traditionally bullying has focussed on *paradigm one* concepts which places the aggressive intention of the bully and the passive acceptance of the victim in the foreground of bullying research but Schott and Sondergaard (2014) suggest, that bullying should also be studied in terms of the social context in which it arises as well as the many shifting roles that occur in a bullying situation (*paradigm two*).

Much of the research literature on bullying definitions is quantitative and generally asks children to select from a range of behaviours showing what they think bullying is (see for example Boulton et al., 2002; Menesini et al., 2002; Cuadrado-Gordillo, 2012). La Fontaine (1991) and Lee (2006) caution against this approach as it assumes children and adults think the same way about bullying situations. Our approach was different because the students were presented with the bullying definition imposed upon them and asked whether they agreed with it or not. Although the majority agreed with the definition, during data analysis it emerged that some participants suggested the definition was long-winded or in need of further clarification. The fact that students did not disagree

with any of the physical and verbal bullying behaviours suggests that the students agreed with adults that these particular behaviours were aligned with bullying (Naylor, 2006). However, students identified certain *aspects* of bullying behaviour that they believed differed from teachers. The students in this study were therefore adding nuances to how bullying was understood at *The Olive Tree School*. In essence, participants acknowledged that bullying in this school was a social construct dependent on the context in which it happened (La Fontaine, 1991; Schott and Sondergaard, 2014).

The analysis from this doctoral study showed that students were mindful of bullying being a social construct in four areas:

- Awareness
- Context
- Isolation
- Intention

Awareness

Some students suggested that those who bully might not always be aware of what they were doing. This concept has been discussed in research literature (Boulton and Flemington, 1996; Stroudt, 2009; Stoudt et al., 2010). Indeed, Boulton and Flemington (1996) concluded that this finding is valuable, as it is only when pupils realise this behaviour is bullying that they can abstain from acting in this way. However questions are raised as to who is defining the behaviour as bullying. In their recent annual survey, *Ditch the Label* (2015) asked young people to define bullying in their own way and then they asked them if they had ever bullied anybody in this way. Later in the survey the researchers provided their definition of bullying and asked the young people if they had ever bullied in this way. The researchers found a significant increase in those who said they had bullied others based on the provided adult definition. The researchers concluded that young people were participating in an array of behaviours that they did not associate with bullying. However this finding illuminates the potential differences in how bullying is conceptualised between adults and children.

The fact that bullies were able to view the situation from the perspective of the victim and change their behaviour accordingly as we found, adds to the debate that bullying is socially constructed and not entirely a result of the personality traits of the bully and the victim (Schott and Sondergaard, 2014). This finding corroborates that of Stoudt (2009) who found boys attending a private school did not realise that the name-calling, and to some extent the physical abuse they regularly engaged in, was bullying but rather saw it

as a form of group bonding. A process of reflection on their behaviour enabled the boys to view their behaviour as unacceptable and to think about the changes they could make.

Much of the limited literature and research in this field focusses on boys attending private day and boarding schools with a narrow focus on girls. Findings from this study show that fewer boys than girls reported bullying and this finding is supported by the wider bullying literature (Rigby and Barnes, 2002). The findings also suggest that some boys did not report bullying because they did not consider the bullying to be serious enough. Consequently, questions were raised about how bullying was conceptualised in terms of its perceived seriousness at *The Olive Tree School*.

Context

Findings from this study support those of Rivers and Soutter (1996) who propose that bullying needs to be understood and dealt with in terms of the context in which it occurs. Some students, in this doctoral research, wanted teachers to take the whole context into account, through gathering evidence, before jumping to conclusions.

The analysis concurs with OFSTED (2003) who found that there is often a difference in how bullying is conducted, it can be one-off or continual, but either way can be damaging. Lee (2006) acknowledges the impact the notion of one-off or continuous bullying can have on policies and considers whether or not interjection should happen at the first intended act or once the action has been continuously repeated and evidence gathered (Lee, 2006).

Isolation

Some students suggested that “isolating a student from a friendship group”⁵⁵ was not always considered to be bullying and was dependent on the context. This finding adds to the literature (Horton, 2011; Schott and Sondergaard, 2014) that bullying is socially constructed and there are constant changing positions within a bullying encounter, therefore the role of the individual and the collective is ever changing. Schott (2014) describes interviews with young people who changed their roles in the bullying episode to fit with a particular group. In the case of “isolating a student from a friendship group” more contextual information was needed such as intention and reason for the isolation.

⁵⁵ Please see *The Olive Tree School* bullying definition in section 6.3.1

This finding has implications for how bullying is defined by adults and young people and how it is defined *between* young people. If students differ in their understanding of what bullying is, then they might not be aware that they are contributing to a potential bullying situation. The analysis concurs with other literature suggesting that secondary school pupils are less likely than adults or younger children to consider social exclusion as bullying (Boulton et al, 2002; Oliver and Candappa, 2003; Naylor et al., 2006). However, the concept of social exclusion can be problematic as it is not possible to know through the use of quantitative surveys, used in the above studies, how social exclusion is perceived by young people as suggested by Lee (2006). The analysis in cycle one showed that students who had formed friendship groups and did not want to include others within their group did not perceive this behaviour as exclusionary.

Intention

When analysing the data, the research team concluded that bullying was an intentional act. Although intention has been debated in the literature in terms of the problems linked with identifying intention (Schott, 2014) this doctoral study takes the view of Horton (2011) who recognises intention in a bullying act as intending to cause harm. This study also acknowledges that intention in a bullying act could mean intending to hurt somebody else to climb a social ladder or intentionally hurting somebody else to remove the focus of the bullying from one student to another. This discourse supports findings from Stoudt et al. (2010) and Duffell (2010) who found that bullying students in private school (Stoudt et al., 2010) and boarding schools (Duffell, 2010) can target an individual for ridicule leading to class bonding at the expense of one student. Our research team conversations noted that a student could intend to not intervene in a situation for the same reasons. The school bullying definition recognises intention from the perpetrator but it does not acknowledge how the bullying is received by the victim. In the group analysis, some of our discussions focussed on the perspective of the victim. The data showed that students wanted all perspectives to be taken into account when a decision was being made about whether bullying took place and although the perspectives of the victim should be given priority it was noted that victims themselves could downplay a situation out of fear of repercussions from the bullies.

6.4.2 What are the views of students and parents in relation to how satisfied they are with the way in which the school deals with bullying incidents?

Three main themes were identified in answer to this question:

- Who is involved in bullying at The Olive Tree School?
- Fear of reporting bullying

- Who participants chose to report bullying to

Who is involved in bullying at The Olive Tree School?

In percentage terms, less boarders reported being victims of bullying than day students.⁵⁶

This finding conflicts with those of La Fontaine (1991) who found more calls reported to a Boarding School Line from victims of bullying than a dedicated bullying helpline open to students in all types of schools. However our study showed that more boarders admitted that they bullied other students compared to day students. This finding conflicts with Pfeiffer and Pinquart, (2014) who found that boarders were more likely to be perpetrators and victims of bullying than day students. It should be noted, however, that this doctoral study was a small scale study limited to one private day and boarding school while Pfeiffer and Pinquart (2014) conducted a large scale quantitative study with a sample of 300 students from nine boarding schools and 406 students from six day schools.

Furthermore in percentage terms more boarders than day students reported bullying⁵⁷ and this conflicts with the literature which suggests the possibility that boarders remain quiet about bullying incidents at school (Schaverien, 2004; Poynting and Donaldson, 2007; Duffell, 2010) while day students can afford to be more vocal as they leave the school premises daily and do not have to face consequences in the evening time (Pfeifer and Pinquart, 2014). However there is also the possibility that this dynamic has shifted with a move to online bullying, so in some respect there is no escape for boarders or day students.

On the whole, more boys were involved in a bullying incident,⁵⁸ but the data shows that more girls, regardless of their status as day students or boarders, reported the bullying than boys.⁵⁹ This finding is supported in the wider literature (La Fontaine, 1991; Rigby and Barnes, 2002; Brooks et al., 2015). For students who were uninvolved in bullying, differences between the genders were noted. There is a possibility that boarders might construe bullying differently to day students. Pfeiffer and Pinquart (2014) suggest that boarders spend more time together than day students so the findings from this doctorate could imply that boarders resolve issues amongst themselves as they arise. Indeed the findings could also imply that bullying was less of an issue for boarders as found by Morgan (2004).

⁵⁶ See FIGURES 6.2 and 6.3, section 6.3 for the roles students played in a bullying incident.

⁵⁷ See FIGURES 6.4 and 6.5 section 6.3.2

⁵⁸ See FIGURES 6.2 and 6.3, section 6.3.

⁵⁹ See FIGURES 6.4 and 6.5 section 6.3.2

Fear of reporting bullying

The data shows that bullying went unreported because students were fearful of retaliation on the part of the bully or of being labelled as a 'snitch'. La Fontaine (1991) and Poynting and Donaldson (2005) suggest that a reason bullying remains unreported at private institutions like boarding and day schools is because people are afraid to report it.

The literature on bullying in private day and boarding schools suggests a number of other reasons why bullying remains unreported. Poynting and Donaldson (2005), Stoudt et al. (2010) and Hodges et al. (2013) acknowledge the historical foundations at many private institutions. They suggest that bonds and allegiances to tradition are formed such that bullying is something that just happens. Indeed Stoudt et al. (2010:35) refer to the behaviour as "the white-noise of bullying" as it is something that is always there and taken for granted. Some students who did not report bullying in cycle one believed the bullying situation was not serious enough to be reported. Fear of reporting it could have enabled the students to downplay bullying behaviour and therefore allow their experiences to be considered normal and part of school life or as a "privilege of age" (Schaverien, 2004:699).

Who participants chose to report bullying to

Most participants reporting bullying chose to tell a teacher. This finding is significant for how relationships are developed between students, parents and teachers at *The Olive Tree School*. It is worth noting however, that these findings conflict with some other literature in the field. Moore and Maclean (2012) and O'Brien and Moules (2013), for example, found that young people were more likely to confide in a family member or a friend before confiding in a teacher about bullying. Both studies involved large numbers of young people so comparisons between forms of support could be drawn.

No student in our data reported bullying to a member of *Blossom* and the focus group discussion showed that speaking to this group is "*almost like a defeat.....a last resort*" (Simon, focus group). This finding conflicts with the study by O'Brien and Moules (2007) in which the authors suggest that children could be more likely to open up to their peers than other adults. The focus group discussions indicated that students do not view *Blossom* as having the authority and power to deal with bullying so therefore students confided in teachers. However, *Blossom* only has representation from sixth form students and there is a possibility that students in need of support did not use this group because it did not meet their needs in its current format.

Finally, the denial that bullying happens in private day and boarding schools is a prominent theme in the limited research literature (Schaverien, 2004; Poynting and Donaldson, 2007; Duffell, 2010; Stoudt et al., 2010). However, much of this literature is based on historical events with no input from current students of the schools, so there is a possibility that the perceptions of the adult participants in the research could have altered over time. Gittins, (2009) argues that adult perceptions of childhood are filtered memories so in some respect concepts change. This PhD study focussed on the views of the parents and students enrolled at *The Olive Tree School* in 2010 so these findings reflect the reality of how they felt about bullying at their school at that time.

6.4.3 What bullying issue(s) do the young researchers want to research?

Although there were some discrepancies with the bullying definition, the majority of students agreed with it, however embedded in the data was the concept around what passes as 'serious' and 'not serious' bullying in this school. Some students reported that they did not tell anybody about a bullying situation because they did not believe that it was serious enough. In addition others were fearful to report bullying due to the possible repercussions associated with 'snitching' and students who had witnessed bullying for the most part did not report the bullying because they did not want to become involved. By the end of cycle one the research team had a number of areas of interest to explore:

BOX 6.3: Potential areas for exploration in cycle two

- Some students were fearful to report bullying in school because they were worried about the possible consequences such as being labelled 'a snitch'
 - Sometimes students did not think the bullying they had experienced and/or witnessed was serious enough to warrant it being reported
 - Students did not use the support of *Blossom* and were more likely to report bullying to a teacher
 - Some students perceived that how they understood bullying was different to how their teachers understood it.
-
- **What do students, parents and staff of this school understand 'serious bullying' to mean?**
 - **Does fear of being labelled 'a snitch' prevent students from reporting bullying?**

6.5 Learning from cycle one

Through the PAR process of planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Lewin, 1946) R4U were able to shed light on the bullying issues at *The Olive Tree School* from an insider perspective. It is unlikely that I would have focussed specifically on 'the snitch' as a research focus without this insider knowledge. In addition, it is unlikely that the teachers of the school would have been made aware that 'snitching' about bullying is something the students of *The Olive Tree School* worried about. Although this was a finding in our data, it was the rich open dialogue with R4U through our weekly meetings and through the analysis process that enabled me to see this as a potential area for exploration and it is unlikely that 'the snitch' would have been the focus for in-depth research if another methodology had been used. Furthermore, through listening to R4U and accepting their position as students of this school with unique knowledge about the social interactions of the students, I was acting on what they were telling me and hence making their participation meaningful (Kirby, 2003b).

The shift from conducting the research from my standpoint at the outset, and moving towards a collegial partnership with R4U, based on what the data and dialogue in the research team was showing, moved the power dimensions in this first cycle⁶⁰. Woodhead and Faulkner (2008) remind us that all too often data such as interview transcripts are analysed based on adult assumptions and ideologies. In this project however the voice of the child was central not only to collecting the data but also in the analysis. Through the process of PAR the research team were able to construct meaning together, based not entirely on our own assumptions and ideologies, but also from the viewpoint of the research participants (Thompson and Gunter, 2009).

6.6 Chapter summary

The first part of this chapter presented a detailed analysis of the research findings in cycle one through the use of descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The second part presented these findings in discussion with the relevant research literature.

Findings from this study recognise that bullying is a social construct, which can change from place to place and person to person. In this respect having a flexible definition of bullying with an input from the school community could encourage students and school staff to consider the behaviours and actions which are unacceptable at this school.

⁶⁰ Please see chapter 8 section 8.4.1: figure 8.2

Furthermore including students in the design and development of the school bullying definition sends a message to the students that their input is valued and taken seriously by adults.

The analysis proposes that students did not necessarily disagree about the behaviours associated with bullying as defined by adults, but students identified certain *aspects* of bullying behaviour that they believed differed from teachers. In essence the student participants acknowledged that bullying in this school is a social construct dependent on the context to which it arises. The analysis shows that some perpetrators of bullying were able to view the situation from the perspective of the victim and change their behaviour accordingly consequently adding to the debate that bullying is socially constructed and not entirely as a result of the personality traits of the bully and the victim (Schott and Sondergaard, 2014).

Findings from this first cycle indicate that some students were unhappy after reporting bullying in school while many chose not to report bullying at all. Fear of being labelled 'a snitch', the possible retaliation of the bully and perceiving the bullying as 'not serious enough' were reasons why bullying remained unreported in the school. The core bullying issues, identified through data analysis and the participatory process, were the concepts of the 'snitch' and what constitutes serious and 'not serious' bullying. This chapter also provided a reflection on the learning from cycle one. Our research questions for cycle two were thus decided by the team to be:

- **What do students, parents and staff of this school understand 'serious bullying' to mean?**
- **Does fear of being labelled 'a snitch' prevent students from reporting bullying?**

The next part of this thesis presents the process of cycle two. I begin with a literature review on what constitutes serious and not serious bullying as well as the concept of telling. I then present the research approach and research findings. Cycle two ends with a critical discussion of these findings with related research literature.

Cycle two: Exploring ‘serious bullying’ and ‘the snitch’

Chapter 7: Exploring ‘serious bullying’ and ‘snitching’

7.1 Introduction

Through the process of participation and data analysis in cycle one, R4U were interested in exploring the concept of the ‘snitch’ and how students distinguish between ‘serious’ and ‘not serious’ bullying in their school. To place the cycle two research questions in context, this chapter begins by exploring the bullying literature concerning the concept of ‘serious bullying’. This chapter also explores the literature around young people’s experiences of telling somebody else about bullying.

7.2 What is serious bullying?

In current literature, serious bullying is usually associated with direct bullying behaviours (Oliver and Candappa, 2003; Maunder et al., 2010; Skrzypiec et al., 2011). These behaviours are recognised as face-to-face actions including hitting, threatening and calling names (Maunder et al., 2010). By contrast, indirect bullying is recognised as rumour spreading, social exclusion, forcing others to do something they do not want to do and have been perceived as less serious by adults and young people alike (Maunder et al., 2010). In reporting bullying, Petrosino et al. (2010) found that direct bullying behaviours were more likely to be reported while indirect bullying was not associated with an increase in reporting. This could suggest that indirect bullying forms are not associated with being serious enough to report.

When some indirect bullying behaviours are perceived as less serious, Maunder et al. (2010) suggest that these perceptions could cause pupils to be less concerned about the behaviours and hence a lack of reporting to teachers. In addition, students who do not regard these behaviours as bullying could be more likely to engage in these behaviours or be less empathetic to students on the receiving end. Once behaviour becomes normal there is a lack of urgency to report it as found by deLara (2012) who also found that bullying was ubiquitous in the schools where her qualitative study was conducted. This finding concurs with Stoudt (2009; 2010) where bullying was regarded as a normal everyday occurrence in his study in a private boys school.

Findings from deLara’s (2012) qualitative study suggest a sense of helplessness for some students who either described the bullying they experienced as not serious enough to report or the bullying being extremely serious but there was nothing that anybody could do about it. Similar findings about the ubiquitous nature of school bullying are echoed by Moore and Maclean (2012) in their examination of victimisation occurring on the journey

to and from school. Findings from deLara (2012) and Moore and Maclean (2012) present a sense of the students getting used to being victimised and bullying thus becoming normalised. Moreover, Maunder et al. (2010) propose that because indirect behaviours do not leave visible physical marks in the way direct behaviours can, they may be viewed as less serious. Skrzypiec et al. (2011) however note a link between name-calling, feeling unsafe at school and not coping with bullying.

A disparity has been noted in the literature between what adults and young people consider hurtful behaviours to be (Maunder et al., 2010; Moore and Maclean, 2012). Maunder et al. (2010) for example, found that staff perceived bullying behaviours as more serious than pupils and suggest that this is a positive finding because:

“...it indicates that staff groups do not hold segregated opinions and interventions could therefore focus on working with staff as a coherent group.”(p. 277)

These authors link the staff’s higher perception of seriousness to staff being clearer about how bullying is defined than pupils. Pupils, suggest Maunder et al. (2010), were less certain than staff about behaviours they regarded as bullying. However, Moore and Maclean (2012) found that what constituted victimisation for the young people in their study varied and depended on a multifaceted array of circumstances. There is a possibility that young people regard the context of a bullying episode as a determining factor in the seriousness of the incident or indeed whether or not bullying has happened at all.

The concept of serious bullying in the literature is somewhat under studied. Some studies identify direct bullying as more serious than indirect bullying (see for example Maunder et al., 2010; Petrosino et al., 2010; Skrzypiec et al., 2011). Others suggest that some bullying behaviour in school is plentiful and almost a part of normal behaviour which is not considered worthy of bringing to the attention of those who can help to sort it out (deLara, 2012; Moore and Maclean, 2012). Finally the ambiguous nature of bullying raises questions about why some behaviours are regarded as bullying while others are not.

7.3 Telling and repercussions

The difficulties faced by young people in reporting bullying have been documented in the literature (Oliver and Candappa, 2007; Black et al., 2010; Petrosino et al., 2010). In their discussion, Black et al. (2010:143) note that:

“...victims fear retaliation by the bully or henchmen, fear that the adult will not take the report seriously, fear that the adult will side with the bully, fear losing face in front of classmates, or fear retraumatization during interview by having to discuss the experiences for incident investigations.”

Indeed Oliver and Candappa (2007) and Petrosino et al. (2010) found that older pupils, in particular, experience difficulties in reporting bullying. As they get older, young people fear being labelled:

“...a ‘grass’ or a ‘mummy’s boy’ should they decide to report experiences of bullying.” (Oliver and Candappa, 2007:82)

Furthermore Black et al. (2010) found that older boys are less likely to report bullying than older girls. They consider that the reasons for this lack of reporting by boys could include stigma for being a victim or “breaking the code of silence” (p.143). Smith (2004) recognises that anti-bullying work is typically more successful in primary school than secondary school and the reason for this could be that in secondary school attitudes towards victims are less sympathetic as pupils get older.

The decision to report bullying by a young person is not easily made (Oliver and Candappa, 2007). Before reporting a bullying situation, victims consider the risks associated with telling anybody, that is, their perception on whether they will be believed and the potential negative repercussions of telling somebody else (Black et al., 2010; deLara, 2012; Moore and Maclean, 2012). Oliver and Candappa (2007) suggest, from their study, that no single option for tackling bullying was identified by participants as an option, which would guarantee that the bullying situation would be resolved. Similar findings were echoed in the bullying literature where students disclosed the coping strategies they would use and who they would and would not report bullying to as follows:

- Sort the bullying themselves
- Telling teachers
- Telling parents
- Seeking support from friends

Sort the bullying themselves

In their focus groups involving 230 pupils across 12 schools in England from year five and year eight, Oliver and Candappa (2007) found that the majority of pupils felt it was important that they could stand up for themselves and ‘sort things out’ in a bullying situation. This was also reflected in their questionnaire findings involving 953 pupils across both year groups (year five, n=174, year eight n=779), where 72% of year five pupils and 61% of year eight pupils believed:

“that ‘learning to stand up for yourself’ would ‘always’ or ‘usually’ work to stop bullying.” (Oliver and Candappa, 2007:77).

These authors do not elaborate on what participants defined as 'learning to stand up for yourself' or 'sort things out'. Indeed findings from Black et al. (2010) show that 'fighting back' was perceived as the most effective measure for dealing with bullying, with 75% of the 2,616 10-14 year olds in their study using this approach saying that it worked. American research by Elledge et al. (2010) found boy and girl victims in their last year of elementary school and their first year at middle school excused fighting back as a strategy in dealing with bullying. These authors suggest that bullied children appreciate the significance of fighting back and that regularly bullied children can in turn be viewed as bullies themselves because they fight back. In the English data from their European study, Moore and Maclean (2012) found that some students, typically male, who fight back, do so to defend a friend who is being victimised. Black et al. (2010) suggest that increased retaliation and less reporting are important findings and raise implications for practice.

Some literature suggests that students are expected, by adults to resolve the bullying themselves (deLara, 2012; Moore and Maclean, 2012). Certainly quotes from deLara (2012) suggest that some teachers expected students to use this approach. Similar findings were echoed by Moore and Maclean (2012) who state that the males in their study who admitted to physical retaliation were more likely to have received advice from their fathers to 'stand up for themselves'. Other findings from Moore and Maclean (2012) show that over 75% of their 1,734 survey participants stated that they did not need any help or advice in dealing with bullying incidents. Focus group discussions show that young people prefer to deal with bullying incidents themselves with the majority (36%) disclosing that they would 'do nothing' about the situation (Moore and Maclean, 2012).

Telling teachers

Reluctance to report bullying to teachers is a theme evident in the literature (deLara, 2012; Moore and Maclean, 2012; O'Brien and Moules, 2013). This reluctance was based on teachers either not doing enough, doing too much and making the situation worse or they were fearful of teachers reprimanding students for reporting bullying (Oliver and Candappa, 2007; deLara, 2012). In their focus groups, Oliver and Candappa (2007) found that participants reported that teachers were more likely to share the bullying information with other adults rather than take swift action to deal with the disclosure. Oliver and Candappa (2007:76) assert that pupils of both age groups (year five and year eight):

“...engaged in a complex process of risk assessment, based on the anticipated responses of their peers and of adults in their immediate social environment of the school, and at home.”

These authors found that as pupils got older they were unlikely to find speaking to a teacher about bullying as ‘quite easy’ or ‘very easy’. Black et al. (2010) reiterates these findings in their American research where they found that 41.8% of participants in their study, reported bullying to an adult at school and just over half (55.6%) said this approach worked. Findings from Petrosino et al. (2010) found that 36% of bullied young people reported the bullying to a teacher or another adult while 64% of students did not. The data set in their study comprised 5,621 of the 6,503 young people aged 12-18 years who participated in a National Crime Victimization Survey in 2007. Petrosino et al. (2010:4) divulge:

“The National Crime Victimization Survey is a nationally representative survey administered annually by the U.S. Census Bureau on behalf of the Bureau of Justice Statistics to persons ages 12 and older in selected households across the contiguous United States. Every other year, the survey includes the School Crime Supplement, which covers all students ages 12–18 who attended at least some school in the prior academic year.”

Students in the study who admitted they had been bullied once or twice in the school year reported the bullying in 32.6% of cases while students who admitted to being bullied almost every day reported the bullying to an adult in 48.5% of cases (Petrosino et al., 2010). Although these figures show an increase in the rate at which the bullying was reported there is still a significant number of students not reporting bullying, that is 67.4% who had been bullied once or twice in the school year did not report the bullying while students bullied almost every day did not report the bullying in just over half of cases (51.5%). Furthermore, between October 2014 and February 2015, the UK charity *Ditch the Label* conducted their annual bullying survey with 3,023 young people between the ages of 12-20 years. Of those who were bullied (43%), 55% reported the bullying with 92% telling a teacher. However 51% reported dissatisfaction after they had told a teacher but the reasons for dissatisfaction were not provided. The main reason for not reporting bullying was because the young people said they could deal with it themselves (40%).

Given that the advice to students is to report bullying to their teachers, Moore and Maclean (2012) suggest surprise at the reluctance young people have about disclosing bullying to teachers. Moreover, Oliver and Candappa (2007) propose that secondary schools can find it challenging to break down the wall of silence linked with bullying. Petrosino et al. (2010) show no statistical significance between reporting bullying in school and school type. Their data shows that reporting bullying to a teacher or other

adult at school took place for 36.4% of students attending public schools, 30.3% of students in private schools and 29.2% of students attending church-related schools. However this data also shows a high number of students not reporting bullying in their schools; 63.6% of students attending public schools, 69.7% of students in private schools and 70.8% of students attending church-related schools.

In exploring the impact American student reports of bullying had on teacher intervention, Novick and Isaacs (2010) found that students reporting bullying directly to teachers was the soundest predictor of teacher involvement. These authors equally found that teachers were more likely to handle an incident of bullying when they felt more prepared to do so. They suggest that the characteristics of particular teachers might be important in determining how bullying is addressed in school and propose that the teachers whom students chose to report bullying to are probably those who are “most active, engaged and responsive.” (p.291). In turn, these characteristics could encourage students to report bullying to teachers (Novick and Isaacs, 2010).

Telling parents

Akin to telling teachers, research suggests that students are apprehensive about telling their parents about bullying due to over-reaction and the feeling that their parents would not be able to maintain their confidentiality to school officials (deLara, 2012; Moore and Maclean, 2012). Tarapdar and Kellett (2011) in their UK cyber-bullying research found that only 22% of young people seeking support chose to speak to their parents. Similarly Oliver and Candappa (2007) report that a pupil's willingness to confide in their parents reduces over time, with 78% in year five and 58% in year eight admitting that they would find it 'quite easy' or 'very easy' to speak to their mothers about bullying while 70% in year five and 44% in year eight said that they would find it 'quite easy' or 'very easy' to speak to their fathers about bullying. However, findings from Oliver and Candappa (2007) show that after their friends, pupils in years five and eight perceive their parents as the most likely source of support.

The context of where and how the bullying takes place may be important, for example, a cyber-bullying study conducted by O'Brien and Moules (2013) found that of those young people who had sought support (n=85), 78% spoke to their parents, 53.7% spoke to their friends and only 42.7% chose to confide in a teacher or somebody else at school/college. These findings are supported by Moore and Maclean (2012) who found that of those young people seeking support after being victimised, the majority (51%) spoke to their parents, followed by 45% who spoke to their friends and 24% confiding in a teacher.

Moore and Maclean (2012) suggest caution with these figures however as they only give an indication due to the likelihood of young people reporting the victimisation to a number of supports and not just parents and friends.

Support from friends

Friends were identified as a source of support before adults in much of the research literature (Oliver and Candappa, 2007; Moore and Maclean, 2012, Allen, 2014). Oliver and Candappa (2007) found that pupils were likely to confide in their friends about bullying in both year five (68%) and year eight (71%) age groups. These authors suggest that young people are more likely to confide in their friends than adults as they get older and school anti-bullying strategies need to be mindful of the benefits of friendship groups (Oliver and Candappa, 2007). Indeed friends offer a source of support to those being bullied and having a friendship group has been identified as a preventative measure to bullying (Oliver and Candappa, 2007; Moore and Maclean, 2012; Allen, 2014) and in developing resiliency following experiencing repeated bullying victimisation (Rothon et al, 2011). Moore and Maclean (2012) consider the fragmented nature of the friendship group. Some young people in their focus group discussions spoke about victimisation within their friendship groups and this was particularly true of the girls who talked about 'falling out' with each other. Moore and Maclean (2012) found that when young people could not confide in their friends they turned to their parents. Equally deLara (2012) suggests that young people turn to adults for support in bullying situations when they are no longer able to deal with the situation themselves.

Taking all of this literature about reporting bullying into account, there is a possibility that there is an immediate reaction from young people as to the type of support that they seek. This support could be context specific. For example, if a young person is the victim of cyber-bullying within the family home they might be more likely to turn to their parents, who are physically present, for support. Conversely if they experience bullying at school they might be more likely to seek out the support of their friends or a teacher.

7.4 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have presented a review of the literature around what is considered 'serious' bullying. The literature shows that direct bullying, rather than indirect bullying, is more likely to be reported and thus considered as 'serious'. Some indirect behaviours have been 'normalised' in schools and as such are not recognised as serious, or indeed as bullying behaviour at all. The studies provide a mixed account of who students report bullying to, but on the whole suggest that friends are sought out for support before adults.

In chapter eight I present the research process of cycle two. I present the dynamics of a power shift between the young researchers and me as the adult researcher and back again. The aim of this process was to enable R4U to collect data from their peers and analyse and disseminate the data thus ensuring the findings reflected the individual and collective experiences of students at *The Olive Tree School*.

Chapter 8: Research Design and Process (cycle two)

8.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into three parts; firstly I present the research design specific to cycle two by focussing on each step of the process from training R4U right through to dissemination. The ethical principles pertinent to this cycle are then discussed. The second part of the chapter presents the cycle two participation evaluation. This final evaluation led to a further refinement in the extended DMP⁶¹ and therefore the original methodological contribution to knowledge from this thesis. This section also presents some reflections on the learning and action from the two research cycles. The third part of the chapter focuses on how *trustworthiness* was upheld across the two cycles of research.

8.2 Research design and process in cycle two

8.2.1 Training the young researchers

R4U were self-selecting and had the option to leave the project without question. As a result, membership on the research team was fluid with some members deciding to leave while others joined at various points throughout the study. By the end of cycle one, our research team was recruited. Hope was a participant in the focus group in December 2010 and afterwards joined our team in January 2011. We did not see any movement on or off the research team during cycle two and membership was as follows:

TABLE 8.1: R4U members in February 2011

Name	Year	Boarder or day student
Hanik	11	Boarder
Taha	11	Day Student
Patrick	10	Day Student
Amy	9	Boarder
Hope	9	Day student

Training for R4U continued throughout cycle two with refresher activities for the older members and additional training for newer members. Kirby (2004) proposes that if participation is done badly it can have a negative effect on young people's future involvement in similar projects. Likewise the participation of young people must be their own choice and adults need to respect the wishes of children who choose not to participate (Sinclair, 2004). Therefore, training in this cycle mirrored the training in cycle one and was cyclical in nature with each phase informing the next. Older members

⁶¹ See chapter 5, section 5.4.2 for more details on the first proposed extension to the DMP.

participated in training newer members and this supported their own learning and development:

“I think this is a unique experience. I don’t think I would have gotten the chance to be involved in anything like this if I went anywhere else, even to a comprehensive school. I’m really glad to be taking part” (Hanik)

We used the learning from cycle one to inform cycle two. Our first task was to decide the data collection methods for this second cycle. Drawing on our experiences of promoting the web-based questionnaire and recruiting students for the focus group we decided to use a different approach for our data collection methods.

8.2.2 Pilot and data collection

The methodological approach of PAR enabled the research team to determine the research questions to be asked, the best methods of data collection and where, when and how data collection took place. On reflecting on the methods used in cycle one the research team decided to use other methods to gather data in cycle two because:

1. The online questionnaire did not elicit a good response from students and fewer responses were received from adults, but when we made the questionnaire available in a paper format the student response rate improved.
2. The traditional focus group method used was described as ‘boring’ by members of R4U who felt that we needed to introduce some activity to this session.

So we used a paper questionnaire in cycle two to generate baseline data. To hear individual stories and viewpoints we provided students with the option to participate in an individual interview or a focus group with other students. This time however we offered pizza and drinks as well as a thank you voucher for participating. Before collecting data, ethical approval was sought from the University Research Ethics Panel⁶².

Designing the information sheets

The research team worked together to design the information material for students and adults. R4U wanted a positive message to come from these information sheets and equally wanted the school community to be aware of what they had achieved so far. Taha suggested:

“We could change the bit that says ‘we received 93 responses’ to ‘we received almost 100 responses.’ I think that’s better.” (Taha)

Other discussions about the student information sheets included:

⁶² Please see section 8.3 for a discussion on the ethical issues pertinent to cycle two.

"I'm not sure about using the gradient effect, a solid colour would be better."
(Patrick)

"There's a lot of text on this paper that students just won't read so we'll need to be clearer but with less text." (Hanik)

Amy suggested we highlight aspects of the information sheet to encourage students to speak to us about their views:

"We need to tell them about the pizza and the vouchers, that way they'll be more likely to join in." (Amy).

R4U felt that older students would rather be asked if they were 'male' or 'female' rather than a 'boy' or a 'girl'. They also had knowledge about the ages of current students in the school so we increased the age range from 11 to 18 years to 11 to 20 years.

The student paper questionnaire design

As part of the ongoing training throughout the project we talked about the types of questions that should and should not be used in research such as leading and biased questions as well as open and closed questions. Games were used in many aspects of our training. In one game members of R4U were given a post-it note, which they placed on their forehead. On this note was a character such as 'the queen' or 'a five year old boy who wants to play'. R4U had to ask questions of each other to find out which character they had stuck to their head. Initially this could only be done through the use of closed questions. Once they had enough baseline information they were free to ask open questions. During this exercise R4U began to understand what types of questions can be construed as leading or biased as well as those questions that are direct and give them the answers to the overall question they wanted to ask. We did activities around arranging question types into groups such as 'open', 'closed', 'leading', 'biased' so the young researchers were able to think critically about question types.

In cycle two the research team used this knowledge to decide the types of questions for the questionnaire and how they should be worded. Initially our first question asked '*What type of bullying is not serious enough?*' but Patrick suggested:

"Should we split this question into two parts so we can ask them about serious bullying and also about not serious bullying? I think it is confusing otherwise"
(Patrick)

Hope was concerned about those students who would like to tell us more about their views but were potentially too nervous to participate in a focus group or an interview.

"You'll have some people who will probably have lots to say but like they're not going to want to talk straight to us. What will we do about them?" (Hope)

For this reason we provided larger boxes on the questionnaire so students could tell us as little or as much as they wanted to about the qualitative questions. Members of the research team designed a post-box, which was left at the school reception desk so participants could post their responses to us. Participants also had the option to return their questionnaires to a member of R4U or to the person they had received them from. Providing the students with a variety of return options ensured that they themselves decided if they wanted their responses to remain anonymous. Additionally, if participants chose to participate in an interview or focus group we asked them to provide their contact details thus negating their anonymity.

The questions for both student and adult questionnaires asked about:

- Demographic data: gender, ethnic origin, boarder/day student
- What they viewed serious bullying to be (student only)
- What they viewed 'not serious' bullying to be
- How the school could ensure students felt safe to report bullying
- Fear of being labelled as a 'snitch'
- Anything else they would like to tell us

The pilot study

We conducted a pilot study for the cycle two questionnaire in the same way as the cycle one pilot.⁶³ Six students, five male and one female from year eight to year thirteen, completed the cycle two pilot. The only change made as a result of the pilot was the correction of a typographical error.

Questionnaire completion

Students

Following the pilot study, the student questionnaires⁶⁴ were sent out on 23rd May 2011. Initially I suggested that we set ourselves up with a stall in the refectory during lunchtime so students could access us at a single point and complete the questionnaires but R4U disagreed with this approach. R4U felt that this idea did not allow for confidentiality. Hope recommended:

"Why don't we give them [questionnaires] to [vice principal] who can ask the heads of year to give them out. They can just leave them somewhere for the students to fill in if they want to." (Hope).

⁶³ Please see chapter 5 section 5.2.3 for more details on the cycle one pilot study.

⁶⁴ The student questionnaire can be found at appendix 13.

We provided the vice principal with 120 paper questionnaires who in turn delegated heads of year with the task of distributing to students. The rationale behind this approach was to receive approximately ten responses per year group and each year group from year seven to year thirteen received 17 questionnaires. Our 'post-box' was located at reception for completed questionnaires to be returned. Students and staff had the option of returning their questionnaires to the 'post-box' if they did not want to return them to the person who provided them with it or they could return them to an R4U member. The data were then entered into SurveyMonkey for analysis.

Initially we experienced difficulty with the response rate - responses came in rapidly and then eased off. Presentations to the student body and promoting the reasons why their input was considered paramount to the research, increased the response rate. Our aim was to have at least 70 questionnaires returned and we received 61 in total.

Adults

Targeting adults was difficult in cycle one so we spent time thinking about how we could meaningfully include their voices in cycle two. Maunder et al. (2010) reported a response rate from adults to be less than 40% across the four schools in their sample and suggest that it is possible that the questionnaires were completed by staff who were "interested or concerned about bullying" (Maunder et al., 2010:279). Consequently this could have resulted in an unrepresentative or biased sample from the adults participating. Novick and Isaacs (2010) had a participation rate of 65% and suggest that teachers participated due to the numerous reminders they were sent.

To make the research as participatory as possible, we wanted to ensure adults' views were not missed in the way children's voices can be missed in conventional research practices (see for example James, 2007; Moran-Ellis, 2010; Tisdall and Punch, 2012). The young researchers were aware that their views and those of their fellow students were only one set of views within this community and as Sinclair (2004) advocates, children's voices will make up one set of views but they need to be awarded due weight alongside others such as adults. Ideas for involving parents included:

"Why don't we send the questionnaire in the post with other mail parents receive from the school?" (Amy)

"We could target parents' evening – leave some questionnaires out in reception while parents wait?" (Hanik)

“We could use [email database] because the school email things to parents all the time. We could use surveymonkey for the parent’s questionnaires and they can fill them in anonymously?” (Patrick)

We agreed that I approach the vice-principal about Patrick’s idea. The vice-principal agreed this approach and parents were sent an email⁶⁵, written by R4U, through the school email system where they were asked to click on a link in the email to access the survey⁶⁶. Contained in this email were my details should they have any questions. The email with the link to the SurveyMonkey questionnaire was sent to parents during the week beginning 13th June 2011 and by 4th July 2011 we received 177 responses from parents.

Involving staff members was important to the research team but R4U felt deflated by the lack of staff responses in cycle one and were unsure how we could improve participation in cycle two:

“There’s no point even doing it” (Amy)

We spoke about the importance of including all views in our research and that we needed to give staff members another chance to voice their viewpoints. We opted for paper questionnaires left in the staff room that staff could either return to a member of R4U or post in the post-box at reception. When staff were slow to participate, Amy took it upon herself to ask her head of year to hand the questionnaires out to staff members. Staff questionnaires⁶⁷ were collated between May 2011 and October 2011. We received ten staff responses.

The interviews

On completion of the questionnaire, students were given the option of taking part in an interview or focus group. Our initial idea was to carry out two student-led focus groups; one for boarders and one for day students. Although we had interest from students about the focus group, no one came forward for this option. As a result, eight interviews were conducted. Hope and Amy were very involved in data collection and promoting the research during this time while Hanik and Taha were on study leave. Patrick was active in promoting the research but he did not conduct any interviews.⁶⁸

The interviews with students followed a semi-structured approach and mainly focussed on their individual responses to the questionnaire. To further aid discussion we designed

⁶⁵ This email to parents can be found at appendix 14.

⁶⁶ The parent survey can be found at appendix 15.

⁶⁷ Please see appendix 16 for the staff questionnaire

⁶⁸ A table of interview participants (TABLE 8.3) can be found in section 8.2.3

a loose topic guide based on emerging findings from the questionnaire data. Kellett (2011:16) proposes that the use of semi-structured interviews is popular in work with children and young people because:

“They have a central core of questions but allow for additional, unscripted questions, probes and follow-ups”.

The approach taken in cycle two was one, which enabled participants to have an informal conversation like they would in their peer group without adults present, although participants had the choice to speak to me as the adult or a member of R4U as a peer. We worked from the rationale that students asking questions of other students could produce different data than adults asking students the same questions (Kellett, 2010b). It has been suggested that some young people may want to speak to their peers rather than adults in an interview situation (O'Brien and Moules, 2007). However a participant might not want to speak to another young person about a highly sensitive issue and should therefore be able to opt for the adult researcher if they prefer (McLaughlin, 2006). I provided pizza and drinks and all participants were presented with a £15 'love-2-shop' voucher as a thank you for their time.

Eight interviews (seven individual and one joint interview with two students) were carried out during cycle two – four by me, four by R4U. Interviews lasted between twenty and ninety minutes and took place in various places in the school. At lunchtime and immediately after school we were allocated with classrooms for interviews and one interview took place in a boarding house in the evening. During the four interviews conducted by R4U I was present for three of them where I remained outside the classroom and I was available if I was needed. For the interview in the boarding house a designated teacher was available to provide support if necessary.

The semi-structured interview questions⁶⁹ included:

- Using what the interviewee described as *serious bullying* in the questionnaire and asking them to elaborate.
- Using what the interviewee described as *not serious bullying* in the questionnaire and asking them to elaborate.
- Who they would talk to about bullying if they needed to.
- How bullying should be reported, in their opinion.

⁶⁹ The semi-structured interview guide can be found at appendix 17.

Prompts were used for each question and additional training was provided to R4U prior to the interviews.

Providing the option to participate in the study through questionnaires, interviews or focus groups as well as providing the students with the option to speak to me as the adult researcher or their peers enabled them to participate on their own terms. Although the research used a qualitative approach some quantitative data were collated in the form of descriptive statistics. This helped us to see who our participants were. Triangulation also took place in the form of different sources of data collected from students, staff members and parents. This triangulation of data about bullying issues, in the form of data collated from multiple sources has not been taken before in a private day and boarding school to the best of my knowledge.

TABLE 8.2 below shows the methods of data collection and the numbers responding in cycle two.

TABLE 8.2: Methods used and numbers responding in cycle two

Respondent	Method	Timeframe	Number of participants	Gender	
				M	F
Students	Paper questionnaire	16th May 2011 – 5th July 2011	61	17	44
	Interviews	27th June 2011 – 6th July 2011	9 (8 had also completed a questionnaire)	1	8
Staff	Online questionnaire	16th May 2011 – 6th July 2011	10	4	6
Parents	Online questionnaire	16th May 2011 – 5th July 2011	177 (133 of which were analysed see chapter 9 section 9.2.2)	30	103
Total			205	51	153

8.2.3 Data analysis

The same analytical process followed during cycle one⁷⁰ was adhered to in cycle two; that of a semantic analysis conducted by the research team in 2011 (June and October) followed by a latent analysis conducted by me in 2014.

⁷⁰ Please see chapter 5, section 5.2.4 for a discussion of the analysis process.

The research team began the process of analysing the student data in June 2011. The purpose of this analysis was twofold. Firstly, we wanted to see what was emerging from the data to inform the interview schedule. This way we could use the interviews to tease out any pertinent issues raised in the questionnaire data. Secondly, having knowledge of what the students were telling us enabled R4U to present these emerging findings to the advisory group and seek their support on the best approach for conducting the potential interviews and/or focus groups. Data analysis was conducted again at the end of cycle two (October 2011) when we combined both the questionnaire and interview data together.

Prior to conducting the analysis of the questionnaire data, training was provided to R4U members through activities and games. At one of our training sessions I opened a box of sweets out on to the table and I asked R4U to arrange the sweets in whatever order they chose. Hanik arranged the sweets into three different random groups. Hope lined them up in order of colour and shape and Amy placed her sweets in a circle of colour clusters. Hanik asked what the purpose of the exercise was and before responding to him, I asked what his interpretation of the exercise was. He said:

"I think it's about groups and bullying and how people can be all part of the same group."(Hanik)

Amy explained that she had arranged her sweets the way she did because:

"This could represent my year group where there are similar people who mix together and others who don't, but really they are all part of the one group. So there might be someone in my group who mixes with someone from another group and although I don't mix with that person we're still linked through this mutual friend." (Amy)

Hanik placed a bottle-top into this circle and asked Amy where the bottle top would fit. The bottle top was green so Amy put it with the green sweets. Hanik asked about this person being a 'floater' saying: *"what about someone who goes from group to group"* but Amy explained that this 'floater' would fit well with her scenario. Hanik asked Amy about somebody who did not fit with any of the groups and Amy's response was *"everyone belongs in this circle."* I asked Amy if the teachers fit in her diagram and Hope responded with laughter saying *"on a line on the outside of the circle"* but Amy believed teachers belonged in the circle in a different cluster:

"I can have a laugh with my form tutor and that links them back to the wider teacher group" (Amy)

I explained to R4U that this exercise was about quantitative and qualitative data analysis.

I explained that arranging sweets in clusters was quantitative data as they can be counted and arranged into quantifiable groups. I asked the group how we could do this exercise to explain qualitative data:

"We could ask people to taste them and tell us what they thought of the taste or texture?" (Patrick)

Provisional analysis of the questionnaire data

Similar to cycle one, our intention for cycle two was to draft the interview questions based on emerging themes from the questionnaire data. When we began our provisional analysis we focussed solely on the student questionnaire responses because time was running out and we needed to design the interview/focus group schedule. We used our meeting times to conduct this analysis. We divided the data between the team and worked in pairs.

When we explored the data in response to how students perceived the seriousness of bullying in the school, comments from R4U included:

"Something that's interesting is the views on not serious bullying. Things like having a laugh or teasing in a friendly way." (Amy)

Patrick's interpretation of the data was:

"Bullying is not serious when everybody sees it as a joke. When the bullying is repeated that's when it's serious" (Patrick)

Hope spoke about the data she had interpreted and included physical bullying as well as name-calling:

"So physical assault is always serious but with name-calling it depends on what they say. So if someone says a racist comment that's bullying." (Hope)

Hanik suggested:

"I think with name-calling it depends on the context because some people are saying that it's OK when their friends call them a nickname but when other people get involved for no apparent reason then this becomes serious bullying." (Hanik)

In our analysis we explored the concept of 'the snitch' and what the students were reporting to us about this concept:

"Some people have said they are not worried about being called a snitch but they would be worried if they were threatened" (Patrick)

The research team were interested in the ideas posed by the students in terms of how they could feel safe to report bullying in school:

Amy: *"Some people said we should have a few people who we can go to. That sounds like a good idea".*

Hope: *"Yes they need to be more approachable."*
Amy: *"Also people said they don't want Blossom⁷¹."*

The research team were interested to know more about what the students had said in the questionnaire so we decided that the interview questions would focus on asking students about their individual responses to the questionnaire. This way we could find out more about what students thought in relation to 'serious' and 'not serious' bullying, as well as their views on feeling safe to report bullying in school.

End of cycle two data analysis

The final round of data analysis took place in September and October 2011 when the students had returned to school after their summer break.

Analysis of the student data

The student analysis was conducted in two parts. Firstly, interview transcripts were divided between R4U who read through them and made a note of anything they found interesting. Our first task was to analyse the data to identify common themes (Aronson, 1994) so R4U were encouraged to highlight quotes and paraphrase common ideas to show the link between their identified themes. Amy and Hope conducted interviews so they reviewed their own transcripts and some others. Secondly, the questionnaire data were analysed for a second time to identify any new themes. As was the case in cycle one, the questionnaire data in cycle two contained quantitative information. This data was displayed in graphs through Surveymonkey⁷², but we were particularly interested in the comments provided by students in the 'tell us more' sections. This data enabled us to construct themes through thematic analysis.

To avoid confusion, the table below lists those students who participated in the interviews (pseudonyms are used to protect identity).

⁷¹ *Blossom* are the student support group in the school.

⁷² These graphs can be found in chapter 9 section 9.2.1

TABLE 8.3: Students participating in the interviews

Student	Status	Interviewed by
Isabella	Boarder	Niamh
Rhys	Day student	Niamh
Alisha	Day student	Amy
Anna and Kelly	Day students	Hope
Phoebe	Boarder	Niamh
Jane	Boarder	Amy
Claire	Day student	Hope
Rachel	Day student	Niamh

Amy reviewed the transcripts of Alisha, Jane and Phoebe:

“It’s interesting how some people think about name-calling and others don’t. Some people can get away with saying certain things to friends but not to other people. I suppose that’s about the context isn’t it?” (Amy)

Patrick reviewed Rachel’s transcript:

“Rachel didn’t think verbal abuse was as serious as physical abuse. She says physical can be more hurtful and have long-term damage but words are just words.” (Patrick)

Amy in reviewing Isabella’s transcript said:

“She says the language she uses outside school would be seen as bullying in school. That’s interesting” (Amy)

A conversation followed about context and how language can be a barrier for some foreign students. The research team were mindful that others have different views to themselves about how situations and language could be perceived. In referring back to our data, the research team were able to consider how certain behaviour can be viewed as bullying in certain contexts. R4U noted that Isabella, for example, spoke specifically about how language can be misinterpreted and Alisha, spoke about the offence caused by “*rude words*”.

Hope spoke about the perception of repetition in the interview she conducted with Anna and Kelly. She said these girls suggested that:

“Repeating the bullying can make it worse but the bullying doesn’t always have to be repeated. Also it’s when the person’s had too much and they’re getting affected” (Hope).

Repetition was also raised as an important aspect of serious bullying in the transcripts reviewed by Amy and Patrick.

The research team were particularly interested in the fact that many students in the interview data said that if they needed to report bullying they would go to their teachers or friends. Many said they would not go to *Blossom* describing this as “embarrassing” (Isabella) and many said they did not know where members of *Blossom* were located or how they could access this support if they needed it. Patrick said of Rachel’s transcript:

“Rachel said she would not go to Blossom because she would feel under pressure, she would feel all the focus would be on her in a group situation. If it was one-to-one then she would probably go if she felt the need.” (Patrick)

Hope also said that Anna and Kelly would:

“....talk to their friends about bullying before going to a teacher because they both said they felt closer to them. Both of them said they wouldn’t go to Blossom but Kelly said she might email them.” (Hope)

Two interviewees (Anna and Kelly) described telling their family about bullying in school. Anna said she would tell her mum while Kelly said she told her mum previously but would not tell her now. Hope suggested that the reason they would not tell their parents now was because:

“Parents can take it too far sometimes and students don’t like that.” (Hope)

Taha in reviewing Claire’s transcript noted that Claire said she had a variety of supportive people she could turn to:

“Claire said she would talk to her friends first but she could also go to her parents or a teacher”

Amy reported that Isabella spoke about wealth as a possible reason for bullying in the school:

“...she spoke about in some schools it’s about drugs or alcohol whereas here it’s about having the latest everything and how much money you have.” (Amy)

Hope reiterated this point saying that Kelly had described the girls in her year as “very up themselves” (Kelly). Hope said from her own perspective “this is so true” (Hope). A discussion about money and wealth took place and Hanik said he had never heard anything in the boarding house about money and bullying. Amy reminded Hanik that if you are a boarder and you are paying full fees you “want to be pretty loaded” (Amy). Hanik agreed but said that it is well known that people in the school have a lot of wealth but he was not aware of anybody being bullied because of this or being a bully because of their wealth. Hanik said:

“I agree though quite a few students are spoilt” (Hanik)

Taha spoke about Claire being on a scholarship at the school and sometimes she cannot afford to buy expensive gifts for friend’s birthday parties. Taha said:

"It seems she finds that quite hard when her friends can buy expensive things and she can't"

Qualitative data from the questionnaire were revisited and no new themes emerged.

Our second stage of analysis was to generate sub-themes under each main theme (Aronson, 1994) so we began to code the data by combining the interview and questionnaire data together. Firstly we studied the quantitative data through the graphs in SurveyMonkey⁷³. I asked R4U to look at these graphs and answer the following questions⁷⁴:

What is the graph telling us?

"We know how many people answered the questionnaire" (Taha)

"We can compare boarders and day students" (Patrick)

"We can see which year groups completed the questionnaire" (Hope)

What is the graph not telling us?

"It doesn't tell us what the school can do to make students feel safe to report bullying" (Hanik)

"It doesn't tell us the other reasons why people do not report bullying" (Patrick)

Do you find anything interesting about the graphs?

"It's interesting that less students are worried about being labelled as a snitch. I thought it would be the other way around" (Amy)

"I thought there would be more boys participating. We really promoted the questionnaire with the boys" (Hanik)

Secondly we sifted the questionnaire qualitative data and interview data for a second time. Prior to this exercise I cut out some quotes and arranged them into the themes already devised by the research team. These themes were placed on cards and put in a row (in no particular order) on the floor. I then mixed up all the quotes and asked R4U to match the comments to whatever theme they felt it suited. This was to ensure the research team were happy with the themes already decided upon. Through this process subthemes under each theme emerged and the team worked together to decide where the data should fit. At times the data did not 'fit' so R4U members placed this data in a

⁷³ Please see chapter 9 section 9.2.1 for more details on these graphs.

⁷⁴ Responses from R4U are comments about the student data. Comments about the adult's data were similar.

miscellaneous pile to revisit again later. This process continued until all the data were accounted for.

Analysis of the adult data

As we had no participation from adults in cycle one, R4U were particularly interested to understand what adults had to say about bullying in school. They were equally interested to hear the adults' thoughts on how students could be enabled to feel safe to report bullying in school. The same process used with the student data of studying the quantitative graphs generated through SurveyMonkey⁷⁵ and theming the qualitative data was adopted for the adult data analysis.

Hanik was very involved in the analysis of the parents' data:

"Most answers were not helpful to answering the question. It was more their opinion. For example they would say that to help with resolving the snitch situation the school should make it more confidential but they didn't say how. Some did, some said about having a phone number or email address but most gave no resolution" (Hanik)

Of the staff data Amy said:

"There was nothing surprising in the teachers responses. Teachers always think it's serious and say nobody worries about it here but that's not what we're finding from students."

8.2.4 Dissemination in cycle two

The research team made presentations to the student body and advisory group and we worked together to determine the structure of the presentations as well as deciding what we should report. Most importantly the research conducted through both cycles of this PAR project resulted in the development of a draft anti-bullying strategy for the school⁷⁶.

8.3 Ethical Considerations for cycle two

The same ethical standards of cycle one were adhered to in cycle two.⁷⁷ Data collection and analysis in cycle two required a further application for ethical approval to the University Research Ethics Committee. For this second application we wanted students of the school to consent for themselves to participate in the study for two reasons:

1. In cycle one, two students wanted to participate in the focus group but were unable to obtain parental consent. Subsequently their voices were missing from the data. As this topic was considered to be highly sensitive for some young

⁷⁵ Please see chapter 9 section 9.2.2 for more details on these graphs.

⁷⁶ Please see chapter 10 section 10.5 for a full discussion on cycle three.

⁷⁷ Please see chapter 5 section 5.3 for more details on the ethical process in cycle one.

people, participation in this research could have enabled those excluded students the opportunity to contribute to making changes to their school based on real experiences. Seeking permission from parents to participate could have deterred some students from participating in cycle one.

2. In the focus group discussion in cycle one and in discussions with the research team, young people divulged that they generally did not want to disclose to their parents their experiences of bullying in school. Students felt they should be able to resolve the bullying in school with teachers and/or other students rather than involving their parents.

The research team worked together on the rationale for not asking for parental consent. I took the lead in writing the application while R4U spoke about what they wanted the ethics committee to know. They were vocal about their abilities to conduct the research, in light of their training, and equally about their fellow students being able to consent for themselves:

“Students should be able to talk to us about bullying in school without having to ask their parents’ permission. I wouldn’t like to ask my mum if I could speak.” (Amy)

Once I had submitted the ethics application, stating that we would ask students to consent for themselves, I received a query from the ethics committee. The committee requested that I seek parental consent for children to be approached to participate in the research and that 'opt-out' parental consent for their children should be used as a minimum. I responded stating that the research team felt that students should be given the option to participate in the study without parental consent. On the student participant information sheet⁷⁸ it was included that although students would consent for themselves they were free to discuss their participation with their parents if they wished. Additionally I received verbal consent from the vice principal not to obtain parental consent but to seek it directly from the students. Challenging the notion of competency of young people to consent is supported in the literature:

“The ‘blanket’ requirement of parental consent for all research involving children under the age of 18 years needs to be challenged as it fails to recognise children’s capacities and accord children due respect as persons in their own right. Flexible ethical guidelines should be developed that take cognisance of children’s competence in contemporary society and at the same time protects children from inappropriate research and procedures.” (Coyne, 2010:227).

The ethics committee accepted our rationale for obtaining student consent only.

⁷⁸ Please see appendix 12 for the student Participation Information Sheet for cycle two.

The final part of cycle two was the evaluation of participation as perceived by the full research team across the two cycles of research.

8.4 Evaluation of cycle two

Evaluation two⁷⁹ concluded that participation is complex, where multiple interpretations can be observed. For the most part, I was perceived as the *controller* of the activities while R4U took a lead in the initiation of *ideas*; both roles were crucial in arriving at our *decisions*. Having evaluated the first cycle from the perception of the young researchers I felt it was important that I acknowledge the role I played in the participatory process. Mannion (2007) suggests that we cannot remove the viewpoints and the role played by adults when we are considering the participation of children in research:

“....a research agenda dedicated to listening to children’s voices alone will not suffice to help us understand these processes which are as much about adults as they are about children.” (Mannion, 2007:414).

This final evaluation process focuses on how I perceived participation in the project. I used data from meeting notes and from my reflective journal to arrive at a pictorial representation of where I saw the participation to be happening across the two cycles of data collection, analysis and dissemination. I then presented this illustration to R4U for comment. Before presenting this reflective picture I explain how I had arrived at my conclusions by reflecting on my role⁸⁰ and the role of the wider research team, across both cycles of the PAR process.

8.4.1 Researcher reflections on participation in cycle two

Cycle two started differently to cycle one because from the outset the full team had been recruited and relationships had developed. Cycle one enabled R4U to observe and contribute to the process of data collection and analysis. Cycle two was the crux of the project as this was the opportunity for R4U to test their new skills and to research an area that originated in the exploratory stage of cycle one.

Training in cycle two continued and was repeated as needed but I do not feel that I entirely led these activities. The boys were involved in training Hope and Amy as the newer members of the team and all were able to reflect on their learning throughout cycle two. As already discussed in evaluation two, decisions made by the research team meant

⁷⁹ Please see chapter 5, section 5.4.2 for more details on evaluation two.

⁸⁰ Please see chapter 5, section 5.4.3 for the reflections on the role of the researcher in cycle one. These reflections also influenced the pictorial representation of participation presented to R4U for comment (FIGURE 8.2)

that changes were implemented for data collection in cycle two. Participation was happening in different ways for all team members. As changes had been implemented, the team were able to see how their viewpoints and ideas were feeding into the whole process and they were participating on their own terms and not those decided by adults (Randall, 2012; Raffety, 2014; Percy-Smith, 2015).

A paper questionnaire rather than an online one and individual interviews were used to collect data for cycle two⁸¹. Patrick was instrumental in designing the research tools and in the analysis but opted not to conduct any interviews. Taha and Hanik were doing their GCSEs at the time so were sporadically involved in the process. Amy and Hope played an active role and between them conducted four interviews. With data collection in cycle two, I perceived this process overall as shared. I perceived the paper questionnaire to be led by R4U with my support but I interpreted the interviews as R4U led. R4U made the decision to provide students with the option to speak to me as the adult or them as the young people. They also took a lead in actively arranging the interviews with their peers and informed me of the dates and times.

Hope enjoyed conducting the interviews:

“It was fun... we talked for ages” (Hope)

Whereas Amy acknowledged the challenges she experienced. I asked both girls if there was anything they were uncomfortable with during the interview:

“The awkward silences.....It was a bit awkward because I didn’t really know her (Alisha) but not so much in the boarding house (Jane) this was more relaxed” (Amy)

“I didn’t have any awkward silences but I think it was because I knew them whereas Amy interviewed people she didn’t really know” (Hope)

We were able to use this feedback to think about how they would conduct interviews differently in the future:

“I would have a conversation with them before the interview start to build up the relationship” (Amy)

“I did that” (Hope)

This was an important learning element for the young researchers. They understood the importance of building relationships when conducting this type of qualitative research. It also encouraged me to think about the training I had provided to them. Hope was able

⁸¹ Please see section 8.2.2 of this chapter for details on cycle two data collection.

to conduct the interviews with no problems and mostly ran over time, whereas Amy's interviews were short without much prompting. Despite the fact they had the same training and Amy was more involved in approaching students for the study, Hope was more fluent at interview. However, during the process of the interviews conducted by the girls, students opened up about their own experiences of bullying and their thoughts about bullying at this school. Raffety (2014) discusses the importance of conversation as a research tool with children. She conducted ethnography in South-west China exploring family bonds between elderly foster mothers and abandoned disabled foster children. During the process of dialogical exchanges, Raffety (2014) noticed that abandoned disabled children spoke freely with their foster parents and foster siblings about their feelings of abandonment. She therefore noted a breakdown in the barriers between adults and children, which provided children with the safe space to speak freely. In this doctoral study the adult was removed from the process during half of the interviews and the young people were awarded the freedom to speak as they pleased. This meant that the discussion tended to go off topic and young people relayed their own personal stories in their own personal ways.

In data analysis for cycle two, R4U had a clearer understanding of the process and I perceived this activity as shared. R4U were able to think critically of the data:

"There was a lot of rambling on" (Hope)

"Some of the opinions were just things you would never think of" (Amy)

They were able to consider how the interviews might have been different between the ones I conducted and those by Amy and Hope:

"There were something's they would tell us and not adults because we are closer in age" (Amy)

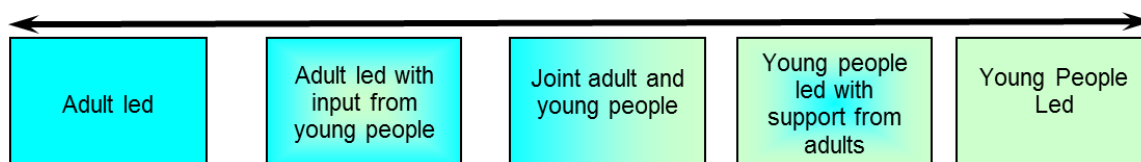
"They feel more comfortable like they're not getting anyone else into trouble. A teacher would probably give a yellow card" (Patrick)

R4U were beginning to think further about the data we were receiving than just what the transcript showed. In essence they were trying to make sense of it by considering the context and how the situation could be different between speaking to adults and speaking to young people. Furthermore they were using their knowledge as insiders of the school to interpret what the students were telling us. Most importantly they were enjoying this experience:

"I enjoyed counting and checking and making tally charts but I did not like flicking through the pages and reading different people's answers as some of them are upsetting." (Hope)

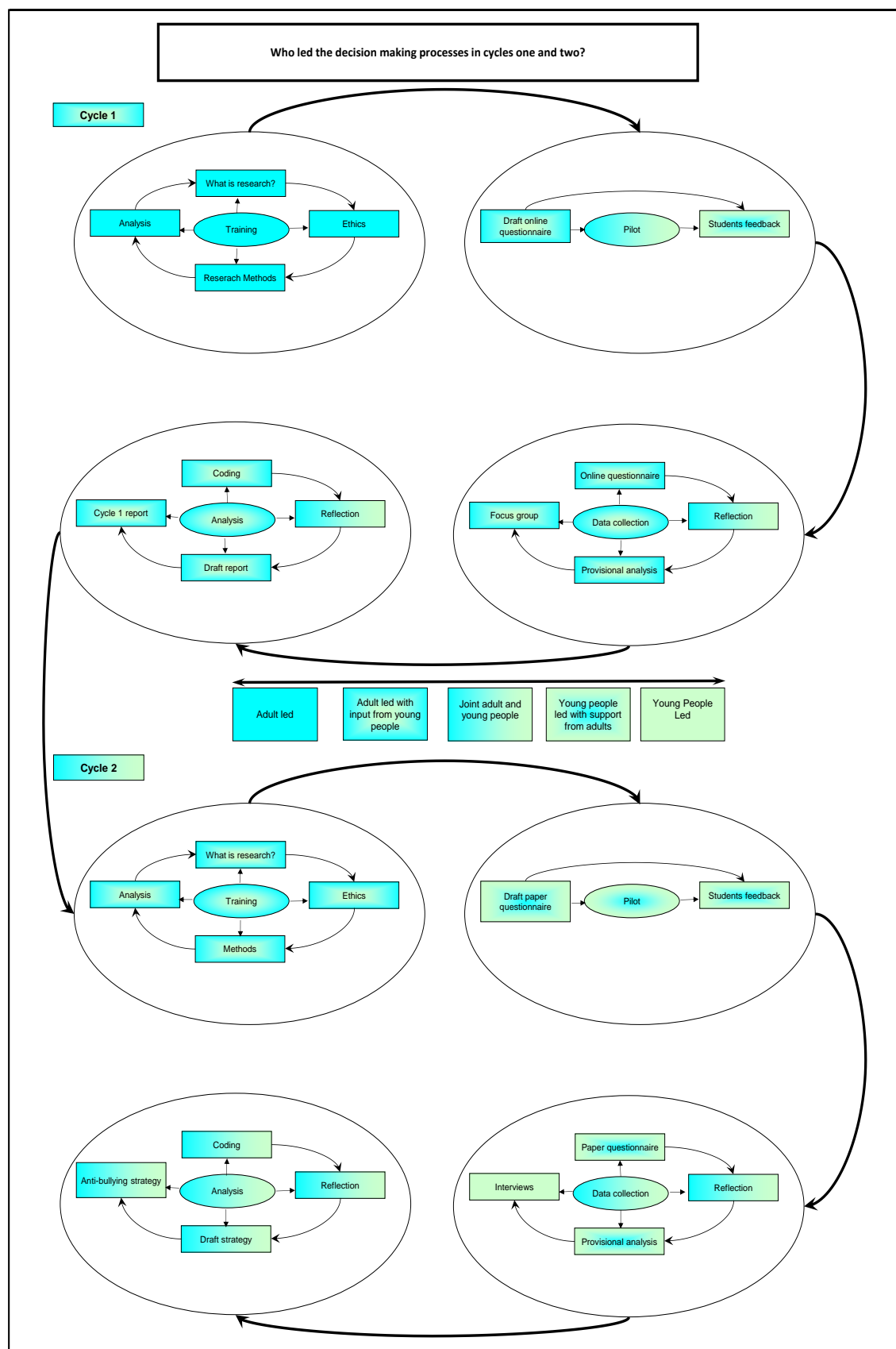
Towards the end of cycle two I presented a model (FIGURE 8.2) to R4U, which I felt depicted the participation journey in the project across the two cycles using the continuum in FIGURE 8.1 below.

FIGURE 8.1: Evaluation three continuum



There were times when I felt I took the lead and other times when R4U took the lead and equally times when we worked together and shared the *ideas, decision-making* and *direction*. It was my interpretation that cycle one was directed more by me than R4U but that this shifted in cycle two. By this point the project *decisions, initiation* and *control* were moving towards a shared process between all team members but this changed dependent on context.

FIGURE 8.2: Breakdown of participation in cycles one and two



I discussed my interpretation of participation with R4U and for the most part they agreed with me but in others they disagreed:

"I think its perfect – with the ethics though, I think that was more you telling us. More related to you than with us in terms of what you had to do" (application to university ethics committee). Thanks for everything it has been a great two years" (Taha)

Hanik proposed I had more input than I suggested:

"I think the interviews weren't entirely us but you as well" (Hanik)

while Amy noticed a situation where R4U had more input than the diagram showed:

"I agree with that but I also think the first focus group was half and half not just you" (Amy)

R4U felt comfortable to disagree with me about my interpretations. In recognising a core principle of this study that meanings associated with participation are varied and multiple⁸², this conversation, and others, supported this claim. It further acknowledges the importance of building relationships during participatory research as without these relationships, power imbalances are rife and we do not understand the multiple perceptions of participation evident in collaborative work with children and adults.

FIGURE 8.2 shows my interpretation of where I believed the decisions were made during cycles one and two. Without the commitment and dedication of the R4U members this project would have taken a different direction. We spoke about this commitment and Taha phrased it well:

"It's like we're a cricket team with 11 players and the coach. The coach helps and supports the team but the team plays the game. Everyone has to work together if you want to win the game. You're like the coach and we're like the team." (Taha)

At the end of cycle two we had a conversation about what each member felt they had achieved by being a part of this project:

"I've learned about listening to others and team work" (Hope)

"I've met a lot more people in the school and I've learned creative ways to involve people. Also I did an extended project over the summer which is part of my application to do PP at Oxbridge. I did it on 'The impact of the World Cup one year on' and I learned how to set up interviews and run them. It's also made me ask more questions because now I want to ask 'why do governments spend so much on international sports events' and that will help me link it to the Olympics next year so it's not just about South Africa" (Hanik)
"I've learned how to help people and about qualitative and quantitative research" (Amy)

⁸² Please see chapter 4, section 4.4.4 for more details.

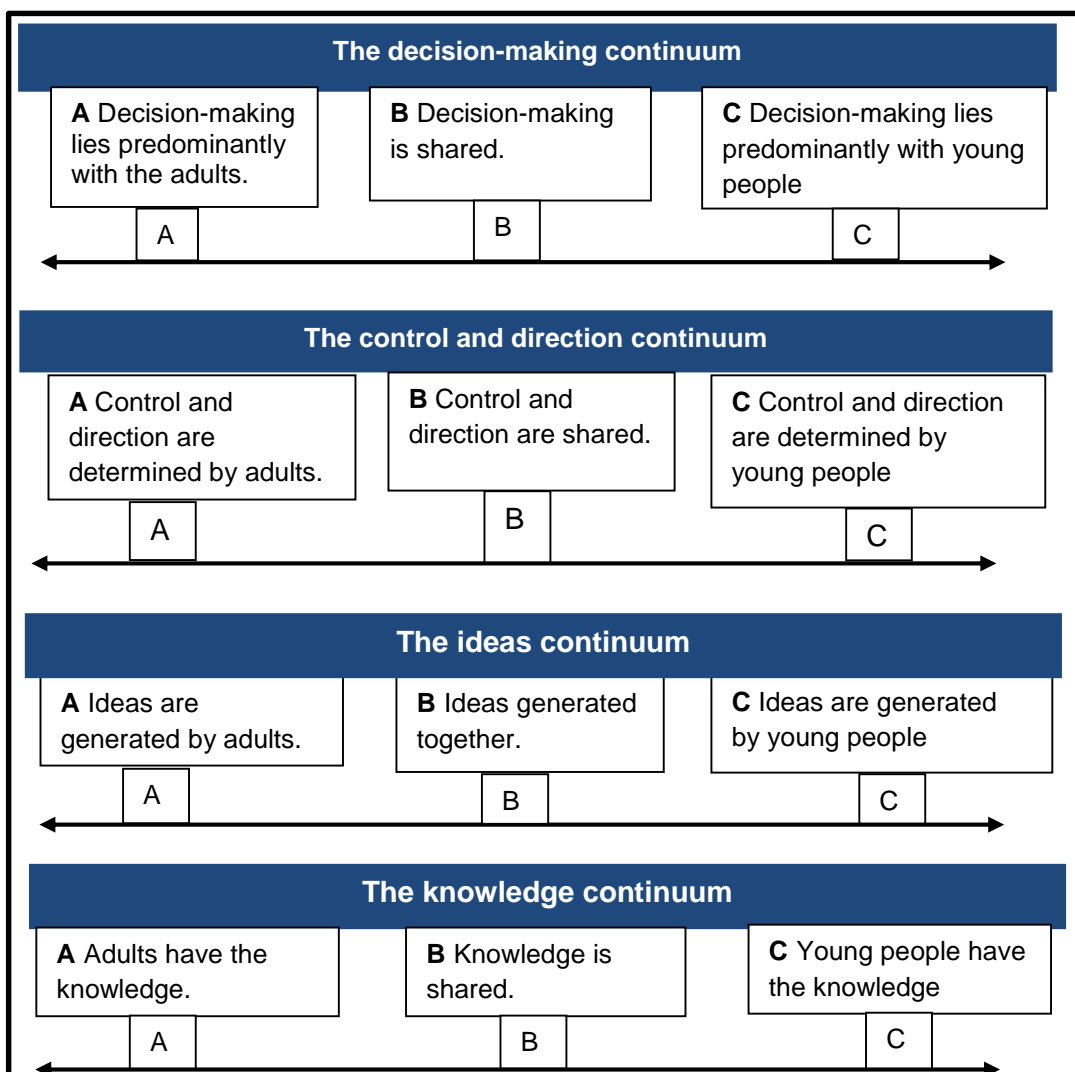
“Why does it have to be about what we learned? I wanted to contribute overall so the overall strategy has been good” (Patrick)

This final evaluation shows the importance of relationship building in participatory research with children and adults. These relationships enable children to participate on their own terms and gain the confidence to put their new skills to use. R4U members were forthcoming about what they had learned and in what they would change if they repeated the work. They also had the confidence to disagree with me and be forthcoming about how they perceived participation.

8.4.2 Conclusions from the three evaluations

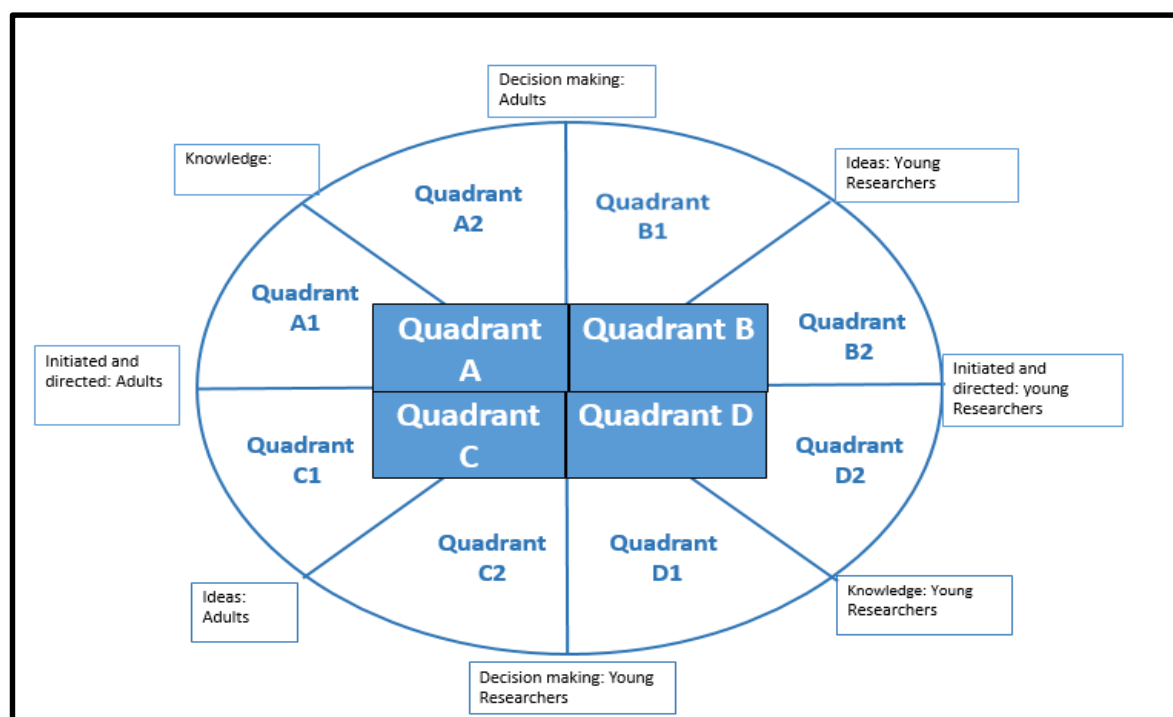
The three evaluations showed that decision-making and participation overall is more than the end result but is a process of generating ideas, discussing these ideas and having the freedom to agree and disagree with others in a safe space. In evaluation two I proposed an extension to the DMP by adding the ‘*ideas continuum*’ to portray how the construction of ideas feeds into the decision-making process. In taking the findings from these evaluations into account and acknowledging the differing agendas for participation, the shift in power and the dialogue that was enabled as a result of critically reflecting on how participation happened, I am proposing a fourth dimension to the extended DMP: ‘*the knowledge continuum*’ as explained in FIGURE 8.3 below.

FIGURE 8.3: Proposed fourth dimension to the DMP



It became apparent that R4U had a wealth of knowledge to contribute to this project as 'insiders' and without this knowledge the findings and action generated would not have been the same. When the four lines were joined together in the middle eight types of participation were evident. These eight types of participation can be seen in FIGURE 8.4 below.

FIGURE 8.4: Proposed double-extension of the DMP



The *knowledge* continuum changes the dynamics of the participation again and splits the participatory activity in quadrant A and D, consequently we have quadrants A1 and A2 and quadrants D1 and D2 as explained in TABLE 8.4 below.

TABLE 8.4 Quadrants and splits in proposed double-extension of the DMP

Quadrant	Activity		
Quadrant A	Adults are the experts who initiate the activity and make the decisions	Quadrant A1	Adults initiate the activity and adults are viewed as the experts
		Quadrant A2	Adults are viewed as the expert and adults make the decisions
Quadrant B	Young researchers have the ideas and they initiate the activity while adults make the decisions	Quadrant B1	Young Researchers have the ideas while adults make the decisions
		Quadrant B2	Young Researchers have the ideas and they initiate the activity
Quadrant C	Adults have the ideas and they initiate the activity while young researchers make the decisions	Quadrant C1	Adults have the ideas and they initiate the activity
		Quadrant C2	Adults have the ideas while young researchers make the decisions
Quadrant D	Young researchers are the experts who initiate the activity and make the decisions	Quadrant D1	Young researchers are viewed as the experts and they make the decisions
		Quadrant D2	Young researchers initiate the activity and they are viewed as the experts

R4U members did not plot their perception of their knowledge contribution to this project but they were forthcoming throughout the process about where they felt their unique contribution, in terms of their individual contributions, had influenced the design and the outcome of the research. It is my perception that knowledge contribution moved back and forth along the continuum from adult-led, child-led and shared, dependent on the context of the activity. Adult-led knowledge was evident particularly at the beginning of the project when training was delivered and in deciding which methods to use for data collection and analysis. Young-person-knowledge was evident in the form of the contextual environment and the bullying situation in the school. Equally R4U had valuable knowledge about what it was like to be a student of this school as a day student or a boarder. Our knowledge was shared as the research evolved and we were all learning about the bullying issues at the school and how we wanted to address them. This double extension to the DMP is the *methodological contribution to knowledge* from this study.

8.5 Reflections on the PAR process

The process

The starting point of this study was for me to work with the students of *The Olive Tree School* to attempt to fill a gap in knowledge. This knowledge gap was both local, with regards to exploring the bullying issues within the school, but also to add to the limited academic debate regarding bullying in private day and boarding schools. Through this authentic in-depth process with R4U the intention was to open up the discussion and hear directly from students themselves about what the bullying issues were. This approach is significantly different from the main body of literature which is dominated by quantitative large scale study designs (see for example Olweus, 2003; Salmivalli, 2010; Smith, 2014). This project has provided an opportunity for R4U to participate in research into an area of importance to them and in an unpublished paper written with R4U, they stated:

“We hope that researchers in the future will take Niamh’s example and provide students with their own opportunity to carry out their own research”.

The process therefore has enabled R4U to play an active role in implementing change at their school through reflection and action at each stage and in challenging the status quo. Through our open dialogue R4U were able to suggest methods they felt would generate most participation, evident in their suggestions for students to complete questionnaires in their own time rather than in the refectory, using the school email system to contact parents and Amy’s persistence in standing outside the staff room to

physically hand questionnaires to staff members. R4U were not concerned about rising to challenges presented through this research and this was helped by the willingness of the vice principal to listen to the students and take their views, and indeed their findings, seriously. Thomson and Gunter (2009) conclude that central to hearing children's voices in school settings is the willingness of the head teacher and staff to be challenged. This research also verifies that hearing student voice through teachers and students working together is indeed a rarity and systems need to change in order to facilitate this reciprocal way of understanding each other's roles and the knowledge each can bring to the research setting (Bragg and Fielding, 2005; Kellett, 2010). This research has allowed for productive dialogue between the students and teachers in terms of understanding what is important to students and the possible reasons why bullying remains unreported at the school. Without the active involvement of R4U in this way such a realisation would not have been possible and this now opens up the possibility for further future inquiry (Mackenzie et al., 2012).

Choice of research design and methods

The decision to begin the study by exploring the bullying definition was made by me but as the study evolved the direction of the research was decided by the research team together. It could be argued that the starting point for this doctoral study should have been to invite an open action inquiry into any aspect of school life the students prioritised rather than focussing on bullying definitions. In the latter, such an inquiry would seek to explore with the students how bullying could be understood and subsequently how adults could respond, by starting for example, with their stories and experiences and acting on these to draw out questions from that inquiry. In the work of Stoudt (2009), his inquiry into bullying with the students was initiated by previous research which identified bullying to be a specific issue at the school. I did not have previous studies at *The Olive Tree School* to locate an inquiry within so a dilemma was presented to me. I wanted to seek as many views as possible and in retrospect this might not have been necessary but I did not want to focus on specific groups as the larger cohort bullying studies have tended to do (see for example Smith, Olweus, Salmivalli). Instead I wanted to focus on the issues specific to *The Olive Tree School*. If an open inquiry was conducted there was the potential to only include a small number of students. This study was located in the senior school with 800+ students and an open inquiry was not considered appropriate in ascertaining multiple views. A starting point for this form of inquiry for future research would be to work with a school who are reforming their own bullying policies or intend to involve students in this reform from the beginning.

PAR is mainly focused on practice-based research and uses a range of research methods (Munn-Giddings et al., 2008). From the outset I assumed R4U would opt for more creative methods in data collection such as the use of a graffiti wall or 'diary room' entries. However they opted for more traditional methods. Although some would argue that traditional methods are not conducive to collecting data within a PAR framework, and that a facilitated inquiry would better suit the approach it is not at all uncommon to use 'traditional methods' in PAR in the field of health and social care research (McVicar et al., 2012). In cycle one, we used a questionnaire and focus group to collect data and although similar methods were used for cycle two there were some clear differences in how the data were collected and the *type* of data collected. This was particularly true for the student led interviews. Although they were guided by a loose topic guide these interview schedules enabled R4U to explore bullying by 'having a chat' with students in a relaxed way over pizza and soft drinks. This approach enabled us to see the nuanced view of bullying apparent in this school. The starting point for the student led interviews therefore was focused on the participants' current experience of school by drawing on the data they provided in the questionnaire.

In exploring bullying with students at an English secondary school using AR, Thomson and Gunter, (2009) report that the students decided that speaking with students and asking them directly about their experiences of bullying was unlikely to produce rich data. They decided to collect data using the focus group method alongside photo elicitation. Cycle two of my project was similar, R4U wanted to conduct an inquiry with students about their experiences of bullying but equally felt that such an inquiry should be led by loose questions. Consequently these loose questions were developed as a result of the questionnaire which enabled us to collect views from large numbers of students. In order to reduce the focus specifically on the individual student experiences, we included a number of vignettes in the focus group in cycle one and we included examples from across the already collected data in the interviews in cycle two for students to comment on. This still allowed for individual stories of bullying to flourish whilst removing the spotlight from those participants who did not want to divulge personal experiences. Thomson and Gunter (2009) reflect that enabling students to inquire into aspects of school life such as bullying through methods including focus group and surveys, allows the students to conduct a form of inquiry and produce valid findings and results. These researchers argue that this form of inquiry allows students to shift from being representatives of the students to those who can present the views of all student participants and not just their own views. Imperative in AR projects is the opportunities for reflection and learning (Thomson and Gunter, 2009) and it is arguable that the

process of PAR is significantly more important than the 'tools' or 'methods' used as noted in chapter four:

"It is important to keep in mind that PAR is neither antimethod nor antipositivism. It is a continuing conversation." (Kidd and Kral, 2005:190)

In cycle one, reflection on our methods enabled us to see that how we approach adults to participate needed to change. Furthermore increased involvement from student participants was a large part of our learning and R4U took the lead in recruiting the students for this process through talks to their classmates and assembly groups as well as casual chats in the hallways. We did attempt to facilitate discussion in cycle one through the focus group and although this was successful there was only a small number of students participating. Numbers almost tripled in cycle two as a result of R4U involvement. Thomson and Gunter (2009:413) argue that involving students in the research process through action and reflection is different from other forms of inquiry which asks 'what works and what needs to be improved' to 'what is going on here and how might it be different.'

In the final section of this chapter, I reflect on the *trustworthiness* of the findings across the two cycles.

8.6 Trustworthiness

There are four criteria for establishing trustworthiness: credibility; transferability; dependability and confirmability (Holloway and Wheeler, 1996). These concepts were used to assess the quality of this doctoral study and are addressed below.

Credibility ensures the findings of the researcher are well matched with the experiences of the participants (Holloway and Wheeler, 1996; Carter and Porter, 2000). Researchers and research participants all had a story to tell and the research team had a responsibility to collate the individual and collective stories and draw conclusions from them. These stories were collated through questionnaires, focus group and interview data. Using questionnaire responses in cycle two to guide the interviews, allowed us to explore the meanings associated with various concepts with individual students in an informal manner. In cycle one, the focus group was shaped by the topic guide, and allowed the research team to speak freely with participants. In addition regular feedback was

provided through presentations, article writing and a research report.⁸³ Research participants were free to dispute or confirm findings as they saw fit.

Transferability is where findings in one situation can be assigned to similar situations or participants (Holloway and Wheeler, 1996). I have acknowledged from the outset that the work of this project was historically and culturally located and a similar study conducted in a different location could produce different findings (King and Horrocks, 2010). Using a whole population survey to obtain questionnaire data went towards ensuring everybody had the opportunity to participate and we did not focus on any particular demographic to obtain data. Ensuring that the participation of R4U was central to this inquiry also meant that the phenomenon under study was truly student focussed and research questions emerged through the findings. Consequently, the findings are context specific (Winter, 2002; King and Horrocks, 2010), but there is potential for the process to have some transferability. The use of thick description, quotes from participants and a detailed description of the research setting (Bryman, 2004), as well as clear analytical frameworks (Aronson, 1994 and Braun and Clarke, 2006) show that the methodological framework of this study could be transferable to other settings.

Dependability refers to clarity and accuracy (Bryman, 2004). Within the study, R4U had several opportunities to discuss their account of the research process and findings through meetings, email contact and dissemination activities. Similarly Herr and Anderson (2005) stress that a fundamental element of AR is ensuring that participants are fully involved in the research process and consequently share control over the process. Running a pilot study to ensure participants were comfortable with the methods proposed and fully engaging R4U in deciding on the methods used and how data would be analysed through training and reflection, ensured young people had control over important aspects of the project. Furthermore, through the voluntary participation of R4U and sharing in the interpretation of the data, transparency has been enhanced.

Confirmability is concerned with ensuring the findings of the research are not a result of biases held by the researcher (Holloway and Wheeler, 1996; Bryman, 2004). Confirmability is thus upheld through reflexivity, the use of an audit trail and the ability to remain as neutral as possible throughout the whole process.

⁸³ See chapter 5, section 5.2.5 and this chapter, section 8.2.4 for details of the dissemination process.

Bryman (2004) suggests that the findings of a study are shaped by the methods used. In this study, data collection methods, as well as recruiting participants and deciding when to collect data were decided by the research team. Additionally, the team were guided by the advisory group. Following the ethos of social constructionism and the philosophy of PAR, methods and questions were changed and refined to ensure that the questions were not leading the study, but the area of inquiry and the process was explored to ascertain whether this inquiry would inform action (Kidd and Kral, 2005).

Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001) state that reflexivity is important in AR because it allows researchers to learn that the judgements they make are not final but open to further question and scrutiny. Reflexivity is undertaken in a systematic and deliberate manner and assertions are supported by evidence but what constitutes evidence is still being debated (Herr and Anderson, 2008). 'Evidence' in the context of this study is manifested in the words and quotes recorded during research meetings, evaluations and advisory group meetings. Additionally, evidence was collated through focus group and interview transcripts and questionnaire responses. These sources of 'evidence' contributed to my research journal, which recorded my assumptions about where I felt the project was going, where improvements could be made and more importantly whether the inquiry was leading to action. Through this process I have been transparent in how decisions were made and how the project progressed. Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001) propose that a researcher is reflexive when they are able to relook at the assumptions made. Regular supervisory sessions provided a space for me to reflect on these assumptions with my supervisors thus adding rigour to the findings.

The process of asking students about their original questionnaire responses helped to triangulate the data and therefore managed any threat to the trustworthiness of the research including reducing the potential for researcher bias.

8.7 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the methodological process followed during the second cycle of PAR. I have focussed specifically on how the research team worked together to conduct the research in terms of the shared decisions made. This chapter has also highlighted the learning carried forward from cycle one to cycle two. This is reflected in how the data collection methods changed from an online questionnaire to a paper copy and then from a focus group co-facilitated by the team in cycle one, to student-led interviews in cycle two. In addition, the team were successful in seeking ethical approval for the students of the school to consent for themselves to participate in the research.

Cycle two saw an overwhelming increase in the response rate of parents in the project, possibly as a result of our approach in how we targeted parents. The response rate from teachers also improved and our data now included the viewpoints and perspectives of all members of the school community.

I have provided reflections on the PAR process across the two cycles of research and I argue that more opportunities need to be provided so young people can participate in meaningful research. I have also argued that many methods or 'tools' are appropriate for collecting data through a PAR approach. This chapter has provided the quality assessment for this study using the criteria of *trustworthiness*.

The evaluation of participation at the end of cycle two illuminated the differences in perception of participation between R4U and me. It recognised the trusting relationship we had developed over the life of the project. Furthermore, the unique contribution provided by R4U as insiders of the school added substantially to the direction the project took. As a result the proposed fourth dimension '*knowledge*' has been added to the DMP. This proposed double extension of the DMP is the unique methodological contribution to knowledge offered by this PhD research.

Chapter nine will present the findings from the research in this cycle before chapter ten provides a critical discussion of these findings and those of cycle one together with the research literature.

Chapter 9: Cycle two Findings

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the findings from cycle two focussing specifically on the concepts of serious and 'not-serious' bullying and the repercussions associated with being labelled as 'a snitch'. These concepts arose from the participatory process and analysis of data in cycle one. As data analysis is an iterative process, themes from cycle one were explored on a deeper level in cycle two. This led to an expanded commentary which follows this chapter.

I begin this chapter by introducing the two research questions:

- **What do students, parents and staff of this school understand 'serious bullying' to mean?**
- **Does fear of being labelled 'a snitch' prevent students from reporting bullying?**

The findings are presented in the context of these questions but before this I present some key statistics about the research participants to put the findings into context.

9.2 The findings from the data in cycle two

This section begins with a presentation of participants in cycle two. Findings from the thematic analysis in cycle two are then combined with the relevant statistical data. In this chapter, data are compared and contrasted between students, parents and school staff.

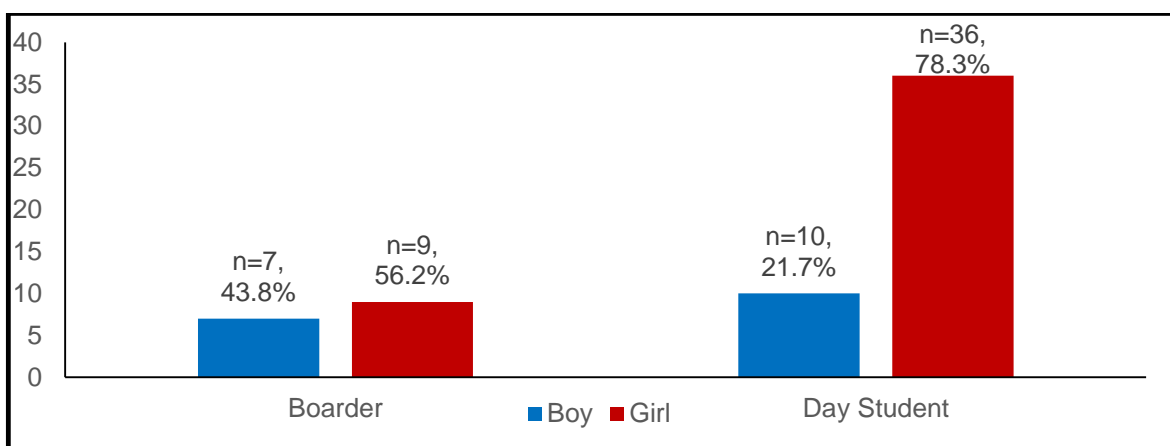
9.2.1 Student statistics

Sixty-two students participated in cycle two. Girls comprised 72.6% (n=45), and the majority were in year seven (n=16, 36.4%). Of this 45, 44 girls completed a questionnaire and seven also participated in an interview. One girl participated in an interview only.

Seventeen boys (27.4%) participated in cycle two and the majority were in year eight (n=11, 64.7%). All 17 boys completed a questionnaire with one participating in an interview.

FIGURE 9.1 shows the status of participants as day students or boarders.

FIGURE 9.1: Day student or boarder in cycle two



To place the findings in context, TABLE 9.2 presents a profile of interview participants.

TABLE 9.2: Profile of interview participants

Name ⁸⁴	Year	Status	Reference in questionnaire data
Isabella	9	Boarder	Interview only
Rhys	8	Day student	140
Alisha	7	Day student	120
Anna	9	Day student	154
Kelly	9	Day student	153
Phoebe	7	Boarder	104
Jane	7	Boarder	103
Claire	7	Day student	127
Rachel	8	Day student	147

9.2.2 Parent statistics

We received 177 responses from parents, but 44 questionnaires were discarded due to these parents solely completing the demographic questions with no qualitative data entered. Where parents answered any of the qualitative questions their data remained. Consequently, 133 parents participated in cycle two. Of this 133, 103 were female (77.4%) while 30 were male (22.5%).

9.2.3 Staff statistics

Staff participation rates improved from cycle one, from two responses to ten responses. They comprised six female staff (60%) and four male staff members (40%). The research team wanted to include the views of all staff members at the school so we asked them to tell us which position they held. Please see TABLE 9.1.

⁸⁴ All names of research participants have been changed to pseudonyms

TABLE 9.1: Roles of staff participating

Role	Number of staff ⁸⁵
Domestic	1
Head of Department	6
Head of Year	2
Teacher	4

9.3 Combining thematic and statistical analysis

The analytical process of cycle two was discussed in chapter eight.⁸⁶ Following a rigorous analysis of the data the two research questions for cycle two were answered using thick description to draw out the voices of the participants.

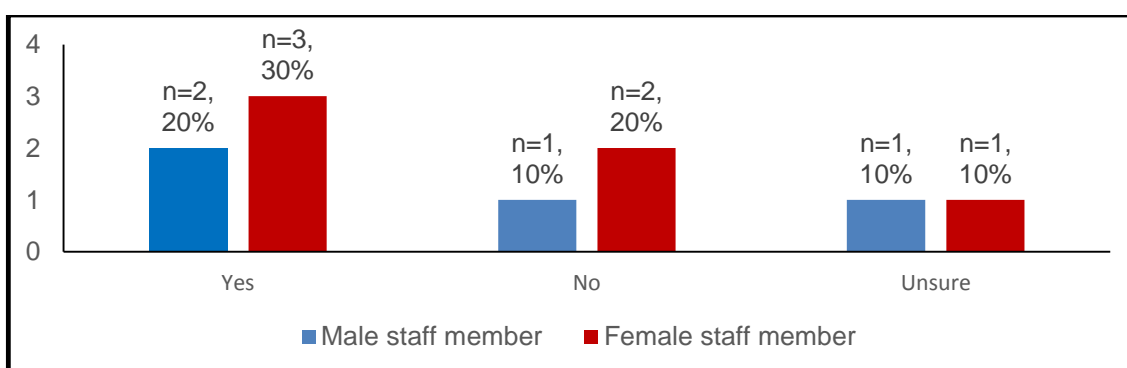
9.3.1 What do students, parents and staff of this school understand 'serious bullying' to mean?

The concept of understanding what 'serious bullying' meant at *The Olive Tree School* was underpinned by two primary findings from cycle one:

- Sometimes students did not think the bullying they had experienced and/or witnessed was serious enough to warrant it being reported.
- Students and teachers sometimes differed on how they understood bullying.

We asked the adults about 'not serious bullying' in two ways. Firstly, we told staff and parents that some of the students participating in cycle one had not reported bullying because they did not think it was serious enough. We asked staff members if they had ever experienced this situation in school. FIGURE 9.2 presents this data.

FIGURE 9.2: Staff awareness of students reporting serious bullying in school

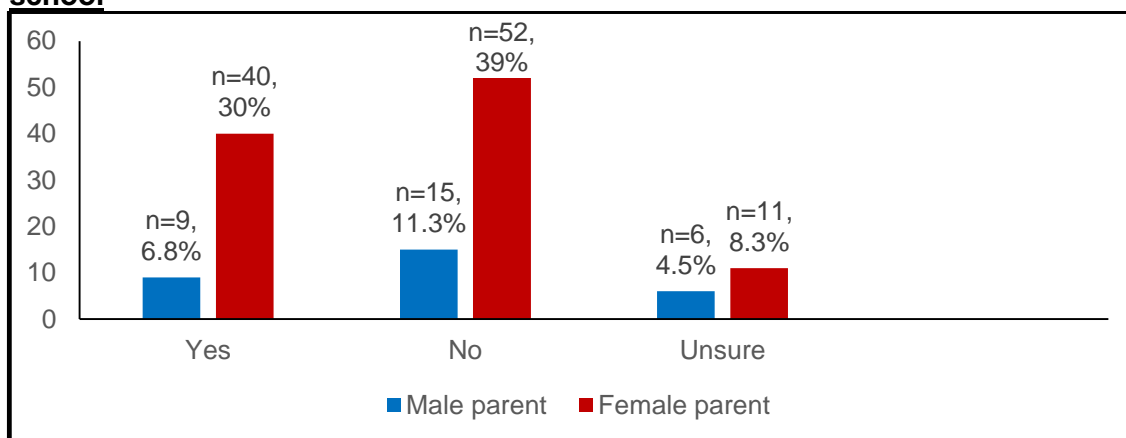


⁸⁵ The questionnaire used all of the roles of staff in the school and those participating were asked to tick all that apply. Therefore the number is greater than 10. Please see appendix 20 for these staff roles.

⁸⁶ Please see section 8.2.3 for more details.

We asked parents if they had ever experienced this situation with their child. FIGURE 9.3 presents this data:

FIGURE 9.3: Parent's awareness of their children reporting serious bullying in school



We then asked the adults to tell us when they thought bullying was 'not serious'. We received data from nine of the ten (90%) staff members and 118 of the 133 (88.7%) parents.

This section presents the data relating to how students and adults perceived the seriousness of bullying at *The Olive Tree School* under four themes:

- Serious bullying
- Not serious bullying
- Resilience
- Very little bullying happens here

9.3.1.1 Serious bullying

In the questionnaire, students were asked to tell us what they considered serious bullying to be. A number of different bullying behaviours and concepts were described and these are broken down as follows:

- All bullying
- Verbal bullying and name-calling
- Physical bullying
- Repetition
- Perception

All bullying

A small number of students believed all bullying was serious and should be reported as soon as it starts:

"Very = people get beaten up, people are threatened for money. Any kind is serious." (Response 100, year 12, male, boarder)

"Bullying becomes serious the moment it starts." (Response 102, year 7, female, day student)

Adults were not asked their views on serious bullying, but 61 of the 118 parents (51.7%) answering the question on 'not serious bullying' suggested that this concept did not exist and that all bullying was serious:

"Any bullying is serious enough to be reported; otherwise it cannot be said to be bullying. Annoying behaviour doesn't count as bullying but it can lead to harassment and bullying. Awareness of what actually constitutes bullying and harassment should be taught so that everyone knows what it is. For example, a one off incident, a falling out of friends, between two peers, is a disagreement, it may lead to wrongful behaviour but is it bullying? Everyone should be aware that bullying is wrong and it should be reported and stopped." (Parent response 12, female)

Five of the ten staff members (50%) proposed that all bullying was serious:

"Bullying is always serious. The only distinction is between the type of bullying and the frequency. Caught and stopped at an early stage is always the best option. However, if we do not know about problems how can we deal with them?" (Staff response 4, female, teacher)

The specific behaviours outlined as serious bullying by students were either verbal and/or physical bullying attacks (proactive aggression). However, most students focused on particular aspects of bullying in the form of intention and reception.

Verbal bullying and name-calling

When considering serious bullying, verbal bullying was not typically considered by students in isolation. Instead, verbal bullying was considered serious when it was carried out alongside physical bullying or if the verbal attack was continuous:

"They also call you rude names and verbally abuse or physical abuse" (Response 99, year 7, female, day student)

"It becomes serious when it becomes frequent and when they start to verbally abuse you lots." (Response 112, year 7, female, day student)

In the interviews, students spoke about verbal bullying as being a serious form of bullying due to the meanings associated with the words:

"...if it like gets really serious like they use really rude words then I think I'd call that severe." (Alisha)

Some participants spoke about verbal bullying being emotionally upsetting and offensive:

"Well, I've been name called like in primary school, but the thing is, I had no friends, so to me when I got name called and repeated by everyone, it sort of went into my mind and I thought, well, OK, well then they're sort of right, and then it continued on in secondary school, even though no one from my

primary school went there, it still continued on. So I think even though it may be little it can still build up to actually feeling bullied in the end." (Isabella)

"If they called you something really offensive then I think you should take it on that it's really serious because you could get really offended, like racism, if they call you one word.....like one racist word, that's still really offensive." (Phoebe).

Physical

Most students, regardless of status as day students or boarders, believed that physical bullying was always serious:

"When the bullying becomes an everyday event - not just a silly comment between friends. If someone is physically hurt then that is bullying straight away." (Response 147, year 8, female, day student)

"When there are a group of people (gang) against you and start touching as in pushing, poking, slapping etc. (minor injuries)." (Response 103 year 7, female, boarder)

"...because physical, like it can be more hurtful, like it can actually have long term damage, but words, they're just words, they're just said a couple of times and then it goes away." (Rachel)

"I think like physical when someone like punches you, you don't take it as a joke, do you, you always think its serious...so if someone's... like constantly coming up and like hitting you, I think that's the worst thing." (Claire)

Repetition

Student data suggests discrepancies in whether or not repetition was a characteristic of serious bullying at *The Olive Tree School*:

"...but it has to be constant it can't be a single time because that always happens." (Response 138, year 8, male, boarder)

Students who spoke about repetition, did not focus on any specific behaviours but suggested the bullying activity needed to be repeated. It was the repetition that determined how serious the bullying was:

"In my opinion bullying becomes serious when it is done consistently to one particular individual." (Response 148, year 8, male, day student)

"When someone causes someone else distress and hurt long term or continuously." (Response 110, year 13, female, boarder)

Anna suggested a one-off verbal attack could be serious whereas Kelly proposed repetition made the bullying serious:

Anna: *"...it depends how that person feels about them calling the name."*

Kelly: *"Yeah. Like if they said something that was hurtful towards me I'd be hurt but I'd be alright with it, but if they kept saying it then I would probably not like it."*

Rachel agreed with Kelly:

"Because if you're repeatedly... like you can take one comment, you can just like almost brush it off, but if you keep on being bullied and bullied and bullied then you might kind of think, hang on a minute, they've taken it a step too far, like it's actually become more personal, whereas just like a cheeky comment between friends it's become something that's more serious and more personal and more annoying or hurtful to someone." (Rachel)

Phoebe suggested that bullying needed to be repeated for it to be serious but she also acknowledged that one-off incidents could have an impact on students

"If it's just once and you never do it again, I think it matters but not as much as it would if it carried on." (Phoebe)

In a conversation with Rhys, he suggested that bullying was serious when it was repeated but also when it was a planned one-off incident:

"...they can be bullying if you're targeted and they plan it and they deliberately intend to bully you.....I think short term is about, I'd say, a day or two, a month, just one a month, and long term is from a month to round about a year and if it keeps on happening."

Although just over half (51.7%) of parents suggested all bullying was serious, others identified certain aspects of bullying as being more serious than others. Some parents proposed that unless the bullying was repeated it cannot be said to be serious:

"...It is not serious if not repeated... it is when things are repeated and children or one child focus's on just one other child again and again" (Parent response 116, female)

"When it is not really bullying i.e. when it is not persistent or when it stops when asked. Children will always be unkind to each other occasionally but bullying is when the victim cannot control what happens and is victimised through no fault of their own." (Parent response 106, female)

The majority of students suggested serious bullying involved repetition, but there was the potential that a single incident could be construed as serious dependant on the context, and in the case of verbal bullying, the words used. Parents did not consider a single verbal or physical incident to be serious but instead suggested that the behaviour must be repetitious to be serious bullying.

Perception

In the questionnaire data, many students suggested that bullying was serious dependent on how it was perceived by the victim:

"When the victim has started to show signs of being upset or hurt." (Response 139, year 8, male, boarder)

"When your self-confidence is severely affected and you become shy. Also when you start believing what the bullies are saying about you and start to doubt yourself." (Response 134, year 10, female, day student)

In the interviews, students spoke about feelings of isolation associated with bullying:

Amy: *"In the questionnaire you told us that serious bullying involves when a person doesn't want to come into school, OK? Can you tell me why you feel that way?"*

Jane: *"Yeah, that's because like if you don't want to come into school then that's really bad and you need to come into school kind of thing, and it's basically that you don't want to speak to anyone, so it's like you're on your own."*

Students reported that the perception victims of bullying had about the bullying incident could manifest itself in fear:

"When the victim starts to feel in danger or start to fear the other person. Consequently he or she tries to avoid the bad guy (or girl!)" (Response 109, year 12, male, boarder)

"When I don't want to come in to school" (Response 120, year 7, female, day student)

Rhys spoke about avoiding social situations to prevent bullying reoccurring:

"Well, because everybody sort of makes you depressed, you know, sort of makes you feel that you don't want to do stuff as much, you know, 'cos they say, let's go into town or something, 'cos you know they may take the Mickey out of your family, so no, I don't want to be with you because I don't want to be seen with you lot. But I think it's really serious when it starts getting into your personal life 'cos, you know, you can come home really sad, you know, you can get depressed. I've even read in some cases kids have killed themselves because of it, and that really affects personal life." (Rhys)

Kelly and Anna spoke about name-calling and how this verbal abuse only transpired as bullying once the victim was offended by the remarks:

Hope: *"Do you think that if someone called you names..."*

Kelly: *"Well, only if it affects the person, because if the person's not really bothered by it then..."*

Anna: *"Yeah, if the person doesn't really care then it's fine. It's not as if they're like going to cry about it."*

Kelly: *"But if somebody's like really... they feel bad about it, then it's not good, it's bullying."*

Isabella spoke about her personal experiences of being bullied at primary and secondary school. She described how she was unaffected by certain remarks but because the name calling and verbal abuse were repeated regularly she began to lose her self-confidence:

".... so when they say stuff, for example, they said to me I was an ugly Spanish girl then obviously that wouldn't affect me, but then they kept on saying other things that made you think well, actually they're right, and then in your mind you're self-conscious and that can take a lot of time to recover that and ever since then that does affect people because it's affected me, it's

affected my friends as well. So I think also mental bullying, even though it may be just a few words, those few words build up and build up and especially if it continues on in other schools. It's like from primary school to senior school, if that continues on that definitely affects you..." (Isabella)

A minority of parents were mindful of perception. These parents noted that regardless of what they themselves considered a serious incident to be, how the incident affected the student on the receiving end was paramount:

"I believe anything that makes a student feel uncomfortable is bullying so it is always serious" (Parent response 128, female)

"If a Child feels upset and intimidated I feel this is serious enough." (Parent response 127, female)

The data suggests that adults were more likely than students to consider all bullying behaviour was serious. Students on the other hand were less likely to consider a blanket approach to bullying and focussed more on the multiple aspects of bullying that they were familiar with, either through witnessing bullying, being bullied or through bullying others. This finding suggests that adult perceptions and young people's perceptions of what constituted serious bullying differed.

The main components of serious bullying for this school were two-fold. Firstly, physical abuse was always acknowledged as serious bullying and verbal bullying was largely dependent on the context and the motivation behind the attack as well as the perception of the recipient. Secondly, repetition was considered an important component of serious bullying for many participants, although some students were able to acknowledge a single incident which was targeted and intended, to be serious bullying.

Within the data a whole spectrum of views about bullying were evident. Student data was more nuanced than the adults' data where students were able to provide personal experiences of what they perceived serious bullying to be.

9.3.1.2 Not serious bullying

Students suggested that 'not serious' bullying included banter and name-calling. Students also spoke about aspects of resiliency which have been included in this section. Although many parents suggested that all bullying was serious, those who suggested certain aspects of bullying were more serious than others have been included in these subthemes.

Banter

Student and parent participants referred to 'banter', where nobody got hurt and everybody understood the behaviour was joking, as 'not serious bullying':

"Banter saying things bad as a joke and everyone knows it is a joke"
(Response 138, year 8, male, boarder)

"Joking remarks coming from a usually harmless person" (Parent response 100, female)

Others acknowledged that 'banter' could be perceived as bullying but without intention to bully such an incident does not constitute serious bullying or indeed bullying at all:

"Not serious could be interpreted as serious however sometimes a personal joke or group banter has no intention to harm another, it is merely playful jokes." (Response 95, year 12, female, boarder)

"When name calling is taken in jest, and everyone is joking, and NO ONE is upset." (Parent response 53, female)

Other participants suggested that onlookers could determine the situation to be one of bullying but for those involved this is not necessarily the case. Isabella spoke about this concept in her interactions with her friends outside school:

"But it also depends, I think, like who your group's with, for example, if I spoke to my friends from [The Olive Tree School] I wouldn't like use taboo language with them because to them it may seem inappropriate and probably a bit shocked, but if I was with my friends outside of school we use taboo language, we'll be ourselves and we'll be comfortable with it, and if a stranger walked past and heard us obviously they'd be thinking that we're being bullied ourselves." (Isabella)

Two other students spoke about 'banter' they were aware of:

"I share lifts with a boy and he says that between him and his friends there's always a bit of banter and there's always like people taking the Mickey out of each other, but he said like it never amounts to anything else, it's always just there, but I've never seen it myself." (Rachel)

"...we've just been joking about, but it's never been anything harsh it's just been like having a joke... well, I haven't done it but I've been in a crowd where people do it, so I don't want to get involved just in case it started an argument." (Phoebe)

Rhys and Claire, suggested that banter between friends was context driven and could depend on the impact it had on the recipient:

"Banter, yes, you know, if they say it in a friendly way and if it doesn't sort of... you know, they don't sort of say, you know, go away, go back to wherever and stuff." (Rhys)

"They don't do it in a friendly way like. If you go up to someone and they're like, their hair like a bit messy you go, what's up with your hair? But then like you're joking about it and then like you laugh about it. But if you think that at

any time they're getting offended you're like, oh sorry, I didn't mean it that way." (Claire)

This was agreed by a parent:

"Children have to learn how to cope with different situations in life and sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between children being boisterous and having a 'laugh' and bullying. I think the impact it has on the child differentiates whether it is serious bullying." (Parent response 6, female)

Most students and parents differentiated between serious bullying and playground behaviour where they likened the latter to 'banter'. For participants in this study, factors determining the seriousness of a bullying incident were related to the intention of the student carrying out the behaviour and the perception of those on the receiving end.

Name calling

In the context of 'not serious bullying', name calling was the only specific behaviour referred to as potentially being 'not serious':

"Name calling depending on what they're saying." (Response 114, year 10, female, day student)

"I never really see any a bit of name calling and taking the mick but nothing ever serious." (Response 138, year 8, male, boarder).

Claire spoke about her experiences of being called names and being aware of others talking about her behind her back, which she attributed to not being serious:

"No, I haven't like been properly bullied where like people have constantly come up to you but I know people have been talking about me behind my back and like saying things about me, but I haven't been like ever properly bullied, no, I wouldn't say it's properly bullied, it's just like name calling and people like whispering things behind your back, just being nasty really." (Claire)

Adults also suggested that 'not serious' incidents usually involved verbal bullying:

"Just name calling that is not persistent." (Parent response 104, female)

"One-off name calling or incident other than physical" (Parent response 65, male)

Boys and girls, whether day students or boarders, suggested that 'not serious bullying' can involve name calling intended as a joke and not intended to hurt any individual. Nobody referred to physical bullying as 'not serious'. The data suggests that in this school a physical attack would not be tolerated by students or staff members and therefore such an incident was always regarded as serious. In the case of verbal bullying and indirect bullying, this often took place away from earshot of teachers and other adults

so it could often be one student's word against another. What constituted a serious verbal attack for students and staff members in this school was not clear but one staff member suggested that bullying:

".....is a matter of personal perspective for both staff and pupils. Some students would consider even the most light-hearted teasing as bullying whereas others can be on the receiving end of a torrent of abuse and not be phased by it. The seriousness of a bullying incident depends entirely on the viewpoint of the victim and bully." (Staff response 9, male, teacher).

Although perception and intention were considered determining factors in assessing the seriousness of a bullying situation, resiliency and the ability to cope enabled some students to deal effectively with a serious bullying situation.

9.3.1.3 Resilience

The concept of resilience emerged through the data in the form of a student's ability to cope with a potential bullying situation. Some students and adults suggested that bullying was not serious:

"When the victim isn't bothered by the remarks" (Response 140, year 8, male, day student)

Therefore although intention might be present, if the bully could not offend or hurt their target then bullying was not considered to be serious. Indeed it could be perceived that bullying had not happened at all. Claire suggested oversensitivity in some students:

"...I think if someone is just having a joke with you some people take it too seriously and they do call it bullying, but I think it's just a joke really and you've just got to take it how it comes..."

Others reiterated Claire's point and suggested those who were sensitive needed to develop the resilience to cope:

"There are certain things that just occur as kids grow up - amongst boys slapping, punching or friendly fights, girls are less likely to physically harm someone but they may do as much harm with gossiping. The margin of bullying depends on every individually, some kids take these funny insults more seriously, others may be more worried about what do peers say and think about them." (Response 109, year 12, male, boarder).

Isabella indicated that building resilience after many years of bullying could be difficult. She described how she started to believe what the bullies were saying about her:

"....you feel insecure and it just builds up and builds up and then in the end you have no self-confidence"

Kelly spoke about being upset if somebody she was intimidated by made a personal comment to her:

"... if it was somebody who I felt more kind of intimidated by maybe I'd be affected, you know, if like she said, if I had worked for ages on my hair and

was really happy with it or something and then they said it looked horrible I probably would be sad."

Adults, similar to students, suggested that bullying could be regarded as serious or 'not serious' depending on the personality of the person at the receiving end:

"Also I think it can depend on the personality of the child and whether they have the ability to stand up to the bullies." (Parent response 91, female)

"When the child is able to deal with it themselves by making it clear to the bully that he/she will not put up with it and it subsequently doesn't happen again" (Parent response 59, female)

Some parents spoke about the need to build resilience in students so they could deal with bullying and other incidents:

"All bullying is serious but a child should have the ability to deal with minor incidents. All children have the right to go to school in an environment that is unthreatened and supportive of their needs but also exposes them to the real world where not everyone will have the same views and opinions as them" (Parent response 42, female)

9.3.1.4 Very little bullying happens at the school

Under this theme, participants suggested that bullying was either a rarity at this school or they felt the school dealt with their individual bullying complaints.

Never been involved in any bullying

In the questionnaire, we asked students about anything else they would like to tell us about bullying at *The Olive Tree School*. From the 15 boarders, 53.3% (n=8) provided this additional data and all eight (five female, three male) told us that there was little or no bullying at the school:

"I have been to 3 schools & visited 4 others, [The Olive Tree School] I believe has the best policy mainly involving students & I have seen the least amount of serious bullying here out of everywhere else I have seen." (Response 111, year 13, male, boarder)

"Well this is a bully free school but I do some minor bullying (teasing)." (Response 103, year 7, female, boarder)

From the 46 day students, 12 (26.1%) told us that bullying either did not occur in the school or only rarely occurred. From the 12, two were male and ten were female:

"I don't think there is any bullying in year 7." (Response 102, year 7, female, day student)

"No, there is limited bullying in sixth form in general." (Response 118, year 13, male, day student)

Although many students suggested that bullying was not a problem at *The Olive Tree School*, they hinted that bullying goes on but it was rare or “minor”. This suggestion could be linked to their own interpretation of what they thought constituted bullying and how “minor” bullying affected individuals.

Comparably, some parents spoke highly of the school in terms of how bullying was handled and managed. Many parents conveyed that their child had not been affected by any bullying incident at school.

“Both my children noticed positively that bullying did not happen contrary to what they had experienced in their previous school” (Parent response 63, male)

“Bullying seems to be under control at [The Olive Tree School] although there will always be those incidents left unreported. Pastoral care is excellent and staff are approachable if students have any issues as far as I am aware.” (Parent response 38, female)

One teacher spoke about his experience of handling bullying complaints on a regular basis:

“The pastoral system and groups such as Blossom are designed to make this as easy as possible for students to report bullying incidents. It would not be possible to create a system where by every single student would feel happy to speak out because of the huge variety of personalities in the school. The current systems are better than I have seen in most schools.” (Staff response 9, male, teacher).

Bullying addressed by school

In one interview, Phoebe spoke about being bullied at her previous school by a boy who now attended *The Olive Tree School* where the bullying continued. Phoebe said that her previous school did not do anything to resolve the bullying issue but she felt *The Olive Tree School* sorted the problem for her:

“... the teachers at my old school didn’t do much about it but then they sorted it out a lot here because... I had enough and I was really upset.”

Parents were forthcoming in their views about how well *The Olive Tree School* dealt with their individual children who had been bullied:

“In my own experience the school dealt with a serious incident of bullying that involved my son as a victim extremely well, but that was because the House Master in charge was so proficient in his actions and knew what to do. The right teacher is therefore very important” (Parent response 12, female)

“My daughter was bullied but The Head of the Year at that time handled the situation fantastically, reassuring my daughter all the way through. Communication with myself was very good. All matters were resolved in the least amount of time.” (Parent response 41, female)

Parents were clear in their message of bullying being resolved by the school, that this was largely down to individual teachers who handled their bullying complaints to their satisfaction.

Although some students in the questionnaire were happy that bullying was rare or did not exist, others in the interviews suggested that bullying did happen and in some cases was detrimental to the welfare of students. Bullying in this school was perceived differently across and within groups of students and adults adding to the debates about how bullying is socially constructed.

9.3.2 Does fear of being labelled ‘a snitch’ prevent students from reporting bullying?

The concept of students not reporting bullying in school was underpinned by two key findings in cycle one:

- **Students were fearful to report bullying in school because they did not want to be labelled as ‘a snitch’**
- **Students did not use the support of *Blossom* and were more likely to report bullying to a teacher.**

Data analysis showed the following themes:

- Worried about being labelled as a snitch
- Not worried about being labelled as a snitch

In the cycle two questionnaire, we asked students if they would be worried about being labelled as ‘a snitch’ if they had to report bullying. Although this fear was identified by some, others were not worried about this label. Participants also identified other reasons why bullying was reported by some students and not reported by others in *The Olive Tree School*. Thus, a third theme arose:

- Reporting bullying in *The Olive Tree School*

9.3.2.1 Worried about being labelled as ‘a snitch’

TABLE 9.2: Students who were worried about being labelled as ‘a snitch’

	Boarders	Day students	Total
Boys	1	5	6
Girls	3	17	20
Total	4	22	26

Fear of being threatened by the bully was associated with being labelled as ‘a snitch’:

“*The reported student threatens me not to, otherwise he will....*” (Response 100, year 12, male, boarder)

"I'm scared that if I tell then the bullying will still go on and they will do more."
(Response 94, year 7, female, day student)

Some students worried about the reaction they would receive from their friends if they 'snitched':

"I would not report bullying....if a friend of mine was being mean to someone else then that would also be the reason I wouldn't tell." (Response 143, year 8, male, day student)

"I think everyone would talk about me behind my back and say I was mean and everyone would hate me." (Response 120, year 7, female, day student)

while others suggested that 'snitching' could result in bullying for them:

"No one wants to be the unpopular kid. Snitching results in your own bullying, people may turn on you." (Response 122, year 13, female, day student)

Claire reiterated this feeling of fear of being labelled as 'a snitch':

"Oh, that's the most thing I'm afraid of, because if you tell the teacher and they go and talk to them, be like, I know you've been bullying that girl..... I think like the key thing when you tell someone about bullying you always think that you're going to be called a snitch and they're going to come back, unless they like get expelled or unless like they have to move school, you know that you're going to have to.....you're going to see them and you're going to be like, oh my gosh, they know that I've told on them." (Claire)

Parents echoed the thoughts of students. Some parents suggested that the school did not always follow-up on bullying reports and in some cases there was no follow-up when the bullying had been investigated:

"After the incident/s have been dealt with, other pupils may isolate the pupil who reported the bullying. School must be aware of how the other pupils behave afterwards.....My daughter says she prefers being bullied to how she has been treated afterwards by large numbers of girls who had nothing to do with the incident" (Parent response 44, female).

9.3.2.2 Not worried about being labelled as 'a snitch'

TABLE 9.3: Students who were not worried about being labelled as a snitch

	Boarders	Day students	Total
Boys	6	5	11
Girls	5	17	22
Total	11	22	33

TABLES 9.2 and 9.3 show that 44 day students answered this question. There was an even split in terms of whether they worried (n=22, 50%), or did not worry (n=22, 50%), about this label. Differences were observed in the boarders data with four (26.6%) fearful about being labelled as 'a snitch' and eleven (73.3%) not worried about being labelled

as 'a snitch'.

Some students, not fearful about being labelled as 'a snitch', suggested that bullying should be reported regardless of this label:

"I do not feel like a snitch if I report bullying." (Response 101, year 7, female, day student).

"...it is no excuse not to report it, it is seriously and adversely affecting someone's life." (Response 111, year 13, male, boarder).

Some students said they did not fear being labelled as 'a snitch' because they never had to report bullying:

"Never have to report bullying" (Response 147, year 8, female, day student)

"No I have never seen bullying at [The Olive Tree School]." (Response 139, year 8, male, boarder)

Others, when reflecting hypothetically on bullying, suggested that if the situation did not involve them they would not become involved:

"Maybe if it wasn't to do with me and I didn't want to get involved."
(Response 138, year 8, male, boarder)

"If I was not being bullied but someone else was it is not my place to report it." (Response 118, year 13, male, day student)

However a small number of students said they did not worry about being labelled as 'a snitch' but they did worry about the repercussions associated with this label:

"The bully might bully you if he finds out" (Response 150, year 8, male, day student).

"If they report it they will be worried that they might get bullied more."
(Response 136, year 10, female, day student)

One boy was worried about the outcome for the alleged bully:

"They might get upset or get badly told off." (Response 142, year 8, male, day student)

Others who did not worry about this label suggested they would, or had, reported the bullying or encouraged the victim to report it:

"Because whoever gets bullied would want to get it sorted." (Response 104, year 7, female, boarder)

"I felt like I needed to tell someone and when I did I felt so much better."
(Response 119, year 7, female, day student)

Although most students said they were not worried about being labelled as 'a snitch' if

they had to report bullying, some considered hypothetical scenarios. Thus how they would react in a real life situation is unclear. The findings suggest that many students were not worried about being labelled as a 'snitch' per se but some were worried about the repercussions associated with this label and as such impacted on their decision to report the bullying or otherwise.

Findings from those who were worried about the 'snitch' label and those who were not worried about the 'snitch' label, highlight that students want to feel safe to report bullying but many were fearful of repercussions. In these cases, some students chose to remain detached from the situation if they were not directly involved, while others reported the bullying regardless of the consequences. Nevertheless there were still students⁸⁷ who would not report bullying they were either in receipt of or had witnessed because of the fear of what the bully would do or of being excluded from their friendship groups.

9.3.2.2 Reporting bullying in *The Olive Tree School*

In the questionnaire and interviews, participants spoke about who they would and would not report bullying to. Cycle one findings showed that students were more likely to report bullying to their teachers, followed by a family member and another student.

Teachers

Of those students reporting bullying in cycle one, most told a teacher. These participants suggested that students felt safe reporting bullying to a teacher. This support however, had a mixed response from students in cycle two. Some students spoke about seeking support from their teachers and confiding in them. These students believed their teachers knew what to do and how to deal with bullying.

*"Just talk to your teacher and then she'd have a quiet word with the person."
(Jane)*

The importance of forming a trusting relationship was expressed by Rachel who said she would report any concerns to her class tutor:

"I have a really good relationship with my tutor at the moment..."

Other participants did not share the same view. Alisha for example, said she would not report bullying to a teacher because she was fearful of the bully finding out and making the situation worse:

"....because they might tell off the bullies and then the bullies will like get back at you."

⁸⁷ Both boarders and day students.

This conversation reiterated what participants reported in the questionnaire data. The repercussions of reporting bullying would prevent some students from telling anybody else about the incident. One student suggested:

"don't tell anyone else about the incident other than teachers" (Response 144, year 8, male, day student)

Some acknowledged that it can be embarrassing to go to teachers:

"I could feel quite apprehensive to speak to a teacher if it was an embarrassing matter, but I would probably tell them anyway" (Response 134, year 9, female, day student)

Isabella, although feeling supported by one particular teacher did not feel she was supported by others:

"That's why I find that when you get bullied you're scared of telling because either, in most cases the teacher will – oh yeah, yeah, don't worry, we'll sort it out and then they don't tend to, and then they get bullied more for it, or the teacher will do something about it. Obviously a private school's going to do something about it, but the relationship between teacher and student here is not as easy as maybe it may be in other schools....."

According to some interview participants, support from teachers was not consistent. Some students suggested that teacher support was provided by individual teachers who took the time to listen to them when they were upset and reassure them that the issue would be resolved. For others, this level of teacher support was not received.

Isabella spoke about building a relationship with one particular teacher. For Isabella, this teacher provided the source of support she needed to overcome her bullying experiences of the past. Isabella described a situation where she was being reprimanded by two teachers. She said she was very upset in the meeting:

"I just looked up at [Miss A] and I go, I'm not myself. Like I was in tears, I could barely talk, my eyes were swollen, I was tired, and I go, I don't feel well at all. I miss home, I don't have friends, I feel insecure, I can't study, and then [Miss B] goes, stop going off the topic, completely back flashes what I've been trying to tell her throughout this whole year.....oh, I needed comforting, I had no family and no friends at that time, so I did a little slip up, yeah, and I got so told off for it, and I was like, I just need a hug, and she [Miss A] gave me a hug and that was all I needed. And [Miss B] just sits there on her desk having a go at you. And I know she's supposed to be motherly like, but that's not how people need to be looked after. Obviously you're going to have to tell them off, understandable, but they're going to need hugs, they're going to need comforting..."

"So I think the best teacher to talk to is [Miss A] and even though people are scared of her I would recommend it, because she's a good listener and she can sense when you don't want to talk about something, whereas the other teachers force it out of you."

This notion that teachers needed to be friendlier to students was also expressed in the questionnaire data:

"Maybe if all the teachers where as friendly as some of the others" (Response 148, year 8, male, day student)

Rhys did not feel he received the support from his teachers that he expected:

"I went to the teachers a couple of times but, no, I don't think they could do anything that was... really to stop it, because, you know, it was just remarks that they called me, you know, they called me names and stuff. I did sort of go three times and it still kept on going, so I just had to sort of deal with it and I sort of took it on the cheek, so I just had to deal with it, so nothing much anymore.....I think I'd talk to maybe like a high ranking teacher maybe, like maybe the head of the year or maybe the vice principal or something, because it gets to them quicker"

Parents, raising similar issues to students suggested that students should have additional adult support:

"there should be a dedicated adult within each year group to whom incidents can be reported without fear" (Parent response 115, male)

"Maybe a sympathetic member of staff for each year that they could confide in confidentially." (Parent response 72, female)

Friends

Students spoke about confiding in their friends. In an interview conducted by Hope, Claire told her that it was quite likely she would go to her friends with a bullying issue. She indicated a range of supports from those she could confide in:

"....so I'd most likely tell like one of my really good friends, like in an older year, so probably someone like you or my mum and dad."

Anna said she felt comfortable speaking to her friends while Kelly suggested friends understand her more than her teachers did:

Hope: *"If you wanted to talk to someone about bullying, who would you talk to?"*

Anna: *"Someone who I knew I could trust."*

Kelly: *"Friends, yeah, I think friends."*

Hope: *"Would you talk to your tutor?"*

Kelly: *"I don't know."*

Anna: *"I think I'd talk to my friends first."*

Kelly: *"Yeah, because you feel more close to them, you know..."*

Anna: *"You feel more comfortable."*

Kelly: *"..you know they wouldn't tell anyone really."*

Anna: *"Yeah."*

Kelly: *"But like, not just they don't tell, you just feel more comfortable about talking to them about these things, like with your tutor you might be like, oh yeah, I'm being bullied; it's just kind of like awkward."*

Isabella found it difficult to confide in anybody about her bullying experiences and for the most part chose to *"just keep myself...like my bullyingness to myself to be honest"*. This academic year she had found a source of support outside of school:

"I got over it this year because I managed to make friends outside of school with Air Cadets and to me they're completely different from school.....Like here I'm a nobody to be quite honest, but in Cadets I am known as like a really nice person who cares for others and they know how I dress and they don't care because I am who I am, whereas here they don't accept that."

Rhys said he would prefer not to speak to his friends and he would rather speak to a teacher. He felt sometimes friends could not always be trusted:

"...because my cousin, he's 17 now, he got bullied by a boy who he thought was his best friend, you know,... you need to know who you're telling first, you need to know if they can really trust you, if they're sensible and that."

Parents

Three interviewees spoke about reporting bullying to their parents; Claire said she would tell her parents if the bullying involved her friends and in the joint interview with Kelly and Anna, the girls said they would report the bullying to their parents if their friends advised them to or if they felt they needed additional support:

Hope: *"Would you ever talk to a family member?"*

Anna: *"I've talked to my mum before about it but recently when I got bullied I haven't told her, and I still haven't told her and I don't really want to.....They're really protective and everything."*

Kelly: *"Well I guess, I think I'd like talk to my friends about it and then see what they say, like if I should talk to my mum or not, and then maybe... because I don't really know how I'd explain it to my mum because she's like... ...I just wanted someone to talk to."*

Phoebe said *"I'd tell my parents"*

Keep it to myself

Isabella and Rhys both disclosed that they had either confided in a friend or a teacher but both felt it was more beneficial for them to keep the experience to themselves:

"I don't tend to talk to anyone about it, I just keep it to myself and obviously that's the worst thing you should ever do, you should never keep it to yourself, because I regret keeping it to myself to be honest...." (Isabella)

"...but I think I'd deal with it myself 'cos.... I was quite insecure but now I'm quite secure with myself, so I'll sort it out myself....I think it's just over time I've just sort of hardened to it." (Rhys)

Isabella acknowledged that keeping the bullying and how she felt about it to herself was not a good idea because this resulted in her own insecurity. Rhys suggested that

because he felt more secure in himself and chose to ignore the name calling, he could deal with the situation himself.

Participants described how reporting bullying was both enabled and disabled by support structures in the school. Some students suggested that they had the full support of either their friends, family or teachers if they needed it. For others, however, they had tried to confide in teachers and friends but to no avail. This meant that those students had to try and resolve the situation alone. Isabella believed that involving others in her bullying situation made the situation worse. For Rhys, he had learned to deal with the constant name calling and said he was able to ignore it now and was therefore more resilient to bullying happening again. Some students told us that they had confided in somebody but the bullying continued. Students have categorically stated that for them to overcome their fears around the repercussions of reporting bullying, there was a need to develop trusting relationship with those they were confiding in.

9.4 Summary of key findings

Findings from cycle two, around the perceived seriousness of bullying, support findings from cycle one which recognises the social construction of bullying. In other words how bullying is understood at *The Olive Tree School* is underscored by the context in which it occurs. Differences in how adults and students conceptualise bullying were also noted. In addition, specific to this study, is the recognition of the fundamental differences in how bullying was understood not only between students and adults but also *between* the students of *The Olive Tree School*. More boarders reported that there was little or no bullying at *The Olive Tree School* compared to day students, while more day students were concerned about the perceived repercussions of reporting bullying (retaliation from bully or from within their friendship groups) than boarders.

Many students were worried about the implications associated with reporting bullying or 'snitching' which impacted on their decision on whether or not to report it. These concerns included repercussions from the bully as well as within their friendship groups. Trust in others impacted on their decision to 'snitch' or not, for example, many students reported that they would confide in teachers over their families or friends. Those who confided in teachers reported having good relationship with them. Others, however, identified embarrassment, fear of teachers making the situation worse and teachers not believing them as deterrents in reporting bullying. Some students said they would not tell

their parents due to over-reaction and some said they would not trust their friends. Overall students stressed that they needed to be able to trust those they were reporting bullying to.

Chapter ten discusses the subject contribution to knowledge from this thesis. The study recognises the social construction of bullying but more importantly I add to the knowledge in the field about the complexities that young people experience in their decision to 'snitch' or not to 'snitch' about bullying.

Chapter 10: Critical discussion of research findings across two cycles

10.1 Introduction

This discussion is focussed on the implications of the findings from cycle two, drawing where appropriate, on the issues raised in cycle one. Overall the findings from the study support the emerging theory that bullying is socially constructed (Horton, 2011; Schott and Sondergaard, 2014). Chapter two has shown that there has been a shift from understanding bullying in terms of the personality traits of the bully and victim (*paradigm one*) to understanding more about the social construction of bullying and how it is manifested in groups (*paradigm 2*) (Schott and Sondergaard, 2014). Consequently, there is no one agreed definition of bullying.

Overall, my study has illuminated the complexity and nuances of understanding different conceptions of bullying and although the literature identifies *differences between adults and children* in how bullying is understood (Naylor et al., 2006; Cheng et al., 2011), findings from this study also suggest that differences were apparent in how bullying was conceptualised *between students* of the school impacting on an individual students decision of whether to disclose bullying or otherwise.

This chapter is divided into two parts: firstly I address the two specific areas R4U wanted to focus on in cycle two: the constructs of 'serious' and 'not serious' bullying and the 'snitch'. This discussion will focus specifically on these two constructs to unravel the ways in which they have been developed. I explore both constructs on a broader level drawing on literature outside of the bullying field. Secondly, as a direct result of the findings from this project and the participatory approach, a draft anti-bullying strategy was devised. The latter part of this chapter will introduce this draft strategy and reflect on the decisions and actions in relation to the PAR process.

10.2 'Serious' and 'not serious' bullying

In considering the constructs of 'serious' and 'not serious' bullying, with the caveat that the sample was small, it is notable that according to the whole sample, physical abuse was always portrayed as serious. Students differed in their constructs around other bullying behaviours such as verbal bullying and social exclusion for example, with discrepancies around aspects being 'serious' and 'not serious'. For the most part, 'not serious' bullying was referred to as 'banter'.

Looking wider afield, similar difficulties in defining 'serious' abuse can be found in the domestic violence literature. Choi et al, (2012:10) suggest that:

"Although the definition of domestic or intimate partner violence includes emotional, economic and sexual abuse, society tends to focus on the physical battery."

Bowen et al. (2005) for example, found less women reporting domestic violence during and after pregnancy when asked specifically about emotional and physical cruelty. They suggest that the use of the word 'cruelty' might have encouraged women to report more severe and serious cases of DV than they might have considered if a more rounded definition, was used. Furthermore these authors ascertain that using a strict definition of DV might have resulted in an under-reporting of the true extent of the problem by focussing on severe cases only. In addition, Hearn (2006) suggests that focussing on the physical and sexual nature of DV is not enough to learn about the true extent of the problem. He proposes that how DV definitions are developed is crucial in adding to our knowledge in this field.

Similarly, the wider bullying literature shows that students and adults are more likely to consider direct bullying to be more serious than indirect bullying (Maunder et al. 2010; Petrosino et al., 2010; Skrzypiec et al., 2011). That is, those behaviours, which are face-to-face and intimidating, rather than underhand and covert, are seen as being more serious. Certainly the House of Commons report in 2007 concluded that physical bullying is easier to identify than verbal bullying or social exclusion. However this reviewed literature does not consider the contextual basis and nuances behind the bullying which were apparent in my study. My thesis supports this literature, however, although no student regarded physical bullying as 'not serious', what separated other bullying behaviours, such as name calling and social exclusion, from being 'serious' or 'not serious' was largely determined by perception and intention. In other words the seriousness of the incident depended on how the behaviour was perceived by the student on the receiving end and the intention of the alleged bully. This study, therefore, uncovered a range of constructs around individual student's understanding of the intention and perception of what happened and how this impacted on bullying being 'serious' or 'not serious'. By contrast the adults tended to have a blanket approach towards what serious bullying was, suggesting that all bullying was serious.

Although differences in the construction of bullying tended to be at the individual level (there were no discernible patterns in relation to gender, age or ethnicity) some differences were found between boarders and day students; and both groups had

different perceptions about the seriousness of bullying and the extent of the problem in the school. More boarders than day students for example, suggested that bullying was either a rarity or did not happen at all. The literature suggests that in some boarding schools, behaviour traditionally associated with bullying has been regarded as 'normal' (Schaverien, 2004; Carlisle and Roffes, 2007; Poynting and Donaldson, 2007; Duffell, 2010). Students in the study by Stoudt et al. (2010:35) described some bullying behaviour as "white noise" because it is something that is always there. As such there is a possibility that boarders of *The Olive Tree School*, perceived the behaviours they witnessed or experienced as being a usual part of school life, more so than the day students. The latter group on the other hand, were less likely to suggest that bullying was a rarity but they left the school in the evenings and weekends and did not have to face a potential bully during this time, as has been identified by Pfeifer and Pinquart (2014). Therefore even within the same context as this case study school, taking into account the different statuses as boarders or day students, constructions varied about how the students themselves understood bullying and its processes.

It is possible that the culture of the school influenced how students conceptualised bullying. This was a private day and boarding school where fees were paid for education and/or boarding. Conversations with the research team highlighted the difficulties some students experienced in 'fitting in' at school and for many there was an assumption to 'just get on with it' so as not to upset parents and others who had invested in their education. Regarding some bullying behaviour as normal was key to this assumption and is reflected in the wider literature (Poynting and Donaldson, 2007; Stoudt, 2009; Stoudt et al. 2010).

These views illustrate the distinctions between adults and children but also between children too. These findings therefore support the values and ethics base of this study acknowledging that meanings associated with bullying are varied and multiple. In essence, acquiring knowledge about bullying has many dimensions (Schott and Sondergaard, 2014). Cuadrado-Gordillo (2012) suggests that adults' views on bullying are influenced by their training and what they witness (teachers) and their emotional attachment to their child (parents). Indeed adult constructs of bullying will also be influenced by their own experiences as children themselves. Although the views of adults are important in understanding the bullying culture of a school, recognising the nuances offered by students is key to understanding any bullying encounter as students are the ones experiencing this phenomena now. Thus how bullying is defined is too complex to reduce to a set of parameters defined by adults.

This study supports the philosophy that the need to listen to students and to consider the context in which the bullying has occurred is crucial in understanding more about the social construction of this phenomena. This in turn suggests the need for a school bullying definition that is regularly revisited so all school community members are aware of what bullying is at the school and what behaviours are unacceptable. Through listening to children's voices about how they conceptualise bullying, the definition would allow for a flexible approach in consideration of the nuanced nature of bullying identified by students. A draft anti-bullying strategy⁸⁸ was developed as a direct result of this study. This strategy is intended to remain in draft so it can be constantly revisited and revised by the school community. It is therefore organic and fluid and seen within the context in which bullying is happening. Along with an effective anti-bullying policy this could be the most effective way to reduce school bullying (Elliott, 2002). Once in place, bullying is likely to be reduced due to joint working by the school community to promote the message that bullying will not be tolerated (Elliott, 2002).

Making a decision as to whether or not something a student experienced or witnessed constituted serious bullying was part of a complex web students navigated when deciding whether to report bullying or otherwise. I identify this navigation as the 'snitch' dilemma and I discuss this below.

10.3 The 'Snitch' dilemma

Some students did not report bullying in school because they did not want to be known as 'a snitch'. Within the confines of this school the use of this term is a thought-provoking one. Despite 'snitching' being a common term used by young people there is a dearth of literature in the bullying field around this term. However 'snitching' is defined in the criminology literature as being:

“...the practice by which criminals give information to the police in exchange for material reward or reduced punishment.” (Rosenfeld et al., 2003: 291).

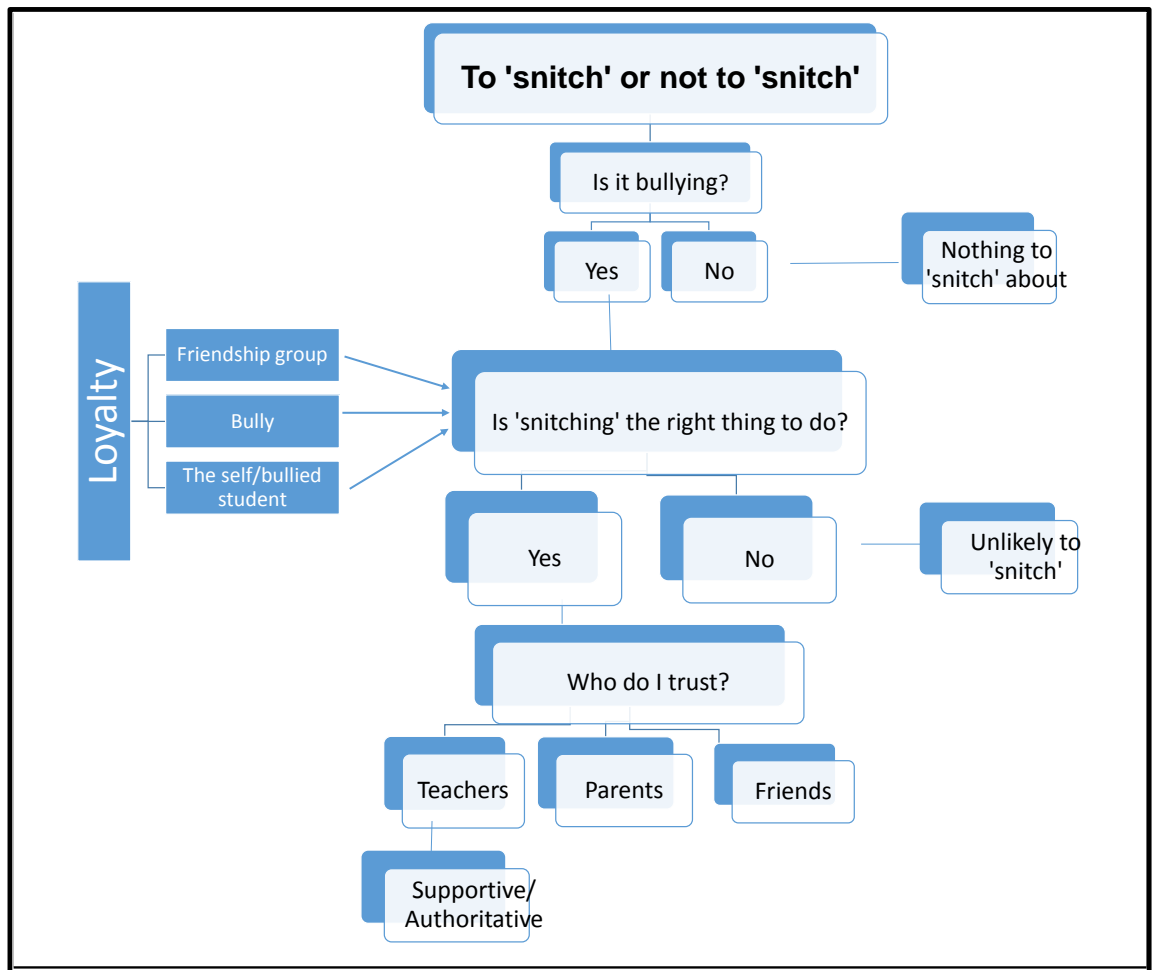
Furthermore, the snitch literature focusses largely on American gang culture (Natapoff, 2004; Morris, 2010; Waldoff and Weiss, 2010; Asbury, 2011). Both Morris (2010) and Waldoff and Weiss (2010) suggest that the 'snitch' label is moving away from criminals and is extending to all parts of disadvantaged communities to anybody with information about criminal activity. They highlight that, since 2004, a campaign known as 'stop snitching' has been running, largely influenced by hip hop music. The message is clear; if you snitch, the repercussions could be serious or even fatal (Waldoff and Weiss, 2010;

⁸⁸ Please see section 10.5 for a detailed discussion on cycle three.

Asbury, 2011). For the most part, people do not 'snitch' due to potential retaliations and because they do not trust authority figures to act appropriately to protect them (Natapoff, 2004; Morris, 2010; Waldo and Weiss, 2010; Asbury, 2011). Morris (2010), for example, uncovered a code against snitching to authority figures at two urban US schools (one predominantly white and the other predominantly black). The reasons for this lack of 'snitching' were related to institutional cynicism generated through social pressures against snitching. He further suggests, that as the school becomes more authoritative, possibly in response to the 'stop snitching' campaign, the social distance between the students and school authorities' increases. Consequently, authority figures are not made aware of any wrong doing.

Although this literature suggests that people do not inform authorities of criminal activity, predominantly in disadvantaged communities, at *The Olive Tree School* students were not 'disadvantaged' nor were they reporting criminal activity. Nevertheless they still used the term 'snitch'. Conversely, students were somewhat influenced by the culture of the school, and this potentially impacted upon their decision to 'snitch' or not to 'snitch' about bullying behaviour. The private day and boarding school literature for example, suggests that bullying remains unreported due to allegiances to tradition and the notion that bullying does not happen in these institutions (Schaverien, 2004; Poynting and Donaldson, 2005; Duffell, 2010). This perception could be why students at *The Olive Tree School* used the term 'snitch' because it is something that you do not do, much the same as 'snitching' about criminal activity. La Fontaine (1991:13) found that in boarding schools the "...fear of being a 'grass' seems stronger" than for those attending maintained schools. These students were fearful of others finding out they had reported the bullying as well as the possible consequences of reporting it. Students at *The Olive Tree School* used the term 'snitch' to describe telling and constructed 'snitching' using a number of concepts, key of which were deciding if 'snitching' was the right thing to do and who they could trust to 'snitch' to, navigating a complex web in deciding whether or not to 'snitch' about the bullying. FIGURE 10.1 presents this complex web and is discussed below.

FIGURE 10.1: The 'snitch' dilemma



10.3.1 Is this bullying and is it 'serious enough' to report?

The complex web in the 'snitch' dilemma is first navigated when a student needs to decide if bullying has occurred.

Having decided that bullying had taken place, the student needed to determine if it was serious enough to 'snitch' about. In this school, physical bullying was always determined as serious by the students, but for other aspects of bullying what determined serious and 'not serious' bullying was largely decided by the intention of the bully and the perception of the recipient. Subsequently, if the bullying was considered 'serious enough' then the student needed to answer this question: *'is snitching about this bullying the right thing to do?'* This decision was influenced by a student's loyalty to their friendship group, loyalty to the bully and loyalty to the bullied student or themselves in deciding if 'snitching' was the right thing to do.

10.3.2 Is ‘snitching’ the right thing to do?

Loyalty

For students who had either witnessed or been a victim of unfair behaviour they had to decide whether this behaviour was worth ‘snitching’ about. However, reporting the bullying could have a negative impact on their social position within their friendship group. Students were therefore in conflict between this loyalty and deciding if unfairness had taken place and should be reported. This is evident in the data where students, even those who said they were not fearful of being labelled as ‘a snitch’ did not want to be ostracised from the wider group. Indeed students were also fearful to ‘snitch’ as a result of perceived repercussions from the bully and also in deciding if reporting the bullying was the right thing to do for themselves or the person being bullied.

Friendship group

Nuances in the data showed that students who were not fearful of being labelled as ‘a snitch’ when reporting bullying, were still concerned about potential repercussions in the form of retaliation from the bully or from their friendship groups, in the same way those worried about this label were. Consequently students who made the decision to snitch, took the risk that they might subsequently be excluded from their friendship groups. This finding supports recent literature (Salmivalli, 2010; Horton, 2011; Schott and Sondergaard, 2014) about how young people perceive their role within their social groups and their belonging to these groups. In the context of a school class for example, students are expected to mix together. However, during these interactions questions about whether individuals belong to that particular group could emerge and these individuals fear that they could be rejected by their peers and ultimately be marginalised by them (Sondergaard, 2012; 2014). ‘Snitching’ about bullying could therefore challenge a student’s role in their friendship group with questions emerging from within the group about the loyalty of the one who ‘snitches’.

“Social exclusion anxiety”, has been used to describe this concept and takes place in communities of belonging (Sondergaard, 2014: 54). All members of a group want to belong to the group and social exclusion anxiety takes place when:

“...a person’s hope and longing to be part of a community is threatened”
(Sondergaard, 2014: 54).

Social exclusion anxiety, postulates Sondergaard (2012; 2014), is different from ‘social anxiety’ which she states is about mortality and loneliness; social exclusion anxiety is about fearing social death rather than biological death. ‘Snitching’ could therefore be

understood as a phenomenon that could change the dynamics within the group. Some students were more worried about the negative connotations linked with being a 'snitch' so in order not to tip the balance they refrained from reporting school bullying. This was certainly true of those students who were not concerned so much with the 'snitch' label but they were concerned with the repercussions of 'snitching'.

The bully

Understanding the role of the group and the process of being accepted was the initial work of Heinemann in the 1970s who proposed that bullying is enabled by the preservation of the group (Horton, 2011). Horton (2011) accordingly suggests that the boundaries of the group are clear by those who are excluded from it. It could therefore be assumed that the bullied students and witnesses considered the bullying students to be more powerful and as a result students were fearful of reporting them to authorities. Salmivalli (2010) suggests that because bullies can be perceived as more powerful, this position enables them to continue with their aggressive behaviour and dominance of a particular group, because they are unlikely to be challenged. The literature suggests that an imbalance of power is what distinguishes aggression from bullying (Vreeman and Carol, 2007; Cheng et al., 2011). Indeed Sullivan et al. (2004) conclude that bullying can remain unreported due to a power imbalance.

Salmivalli (2010) and Smith (2014) consider the social standing within the group between the bully and the victim and consider that if the victim has a lower social ranking within the wider group, other group members are less likely to empathise with them. If this is reversed however, other group members are likely to intervene. In considering this idea of social ranking and comparing it to fairness and how this is perceived within the group, it is possible that students consider fairness and social ranking in their decision to 'snitch'. Dungan et al. (2015) in their study on the psychology of whistleblowing, propose that whistleblowing can be seen as positive, or even heroic, or negative in terms of being a 'snitch', and there is often a trade-off made between loyalty and fairness in this decision. They propose that when fairness increases, whistleblowing increases and when loyalty increases whistleblowing decreases. Consequently, when applied to bullying, the perception of what is considered 'fair' will have an impact on a student's decision 'to snitch'.

The self/bullied student

Although the guidance in schools is for students to report bullying to adults, it is also important to recognise when students feel it is right 'to tell'. From a young age, children are encouraged not to 'tell tales' when they approach adults with day to day issues. Adults tell them to try to resolve issues amongst themselves to enable them to resolve conflict. However by instilling these notions there is a possibility that we are confusing children about when is the right time to report anything and how adults will react to what children say. Consequently, children are faced with a dilemma about whether or not they should tell anybody at all. In deciding to report bullying, students at *The Olive Tree School* had to determine if 'snitching' would improve the situation for themselves or for other bullied students. In boarding school La Fontaine (1991:18) proposes that there is a clear moral code preventing students from "grassing" on other students. In these cases students could find it very difficult to report bullying and as a consequence continue to suffer in silence. Indeed the data shows that for some students the situation got worse once the bullying had been reported. This finding is reflected in recent research where Rigby (2015) found that bullying got worse for 7% of students reporting bullying in school.

Determining if 'snitching' is the right thing to do highlights the complexity of the decision-making process about whether a student should report unfair behaviour. This complex web therefore makes the issue of students dealing with bullying more complex than adults once thought.

Having made the decision that 'snitching' is the right thing to do, students had to decide who they would 'snitch' to and this decision was heavily influenced by who they trusted.

10.3.3 Who do I trust?

Students who chose to report bullying were very clear about who they would report it to and trust was an important construct in their decision. If a student chose to report bullying they were often fearful of others finding out, and possibly labelling them as a 'snitch'. Some students feared telling their teachers about bullying because they did not want the bullying student to find out about it. This finding is consistent with the literature that students are somewhat reluctant to confide in teachers because they fear they will not do enough, do too much about the complaint, or in some cases make the bullying situation worse (Rigby and Barnes, 2002; Oliver and Candappa, 2007; deLara, 2012).

The literature (Rigby and Barnes, 2002; Oliver and Candappa, 2007; deLara 2012), further suggests that students are more likely to turn to their friends because they trust them and can relate to them more so than adults. Although it was evident in the qualitative data in this study that some students regarded some friends as a source of support, this was not supported by the quantitative data, suggesting that friends were less likely to be confided in about bullying. Of course there is also the possibility that students refrained from reporting to their friends or other students because they feared upsetting the status quo of their group as discussed above.

For other students, the reason they felt comfortable to report bullying was due to the support they received from particular teachers and the relationships they had with them. Findings suggest that boarders, regardless of gender, could regard teachers as a source of support in lieu of parents. Certainly Smith (2014) notes that teachers attitudes towards bullying and how they respond, as well as the general ethos of the school towards bullying, will play an important role in how this problem is addressed at school level. Novick and Isaacs (2010) identified particular characteristics of some teachers which might have enabled young people to confide in them about their bullying experiences or concerns. They suggest that these teachers are aware of the issues, listen to students and act accordingly and might be the reason why bullying is addressed in some schools.

Although my study found that the majority of students did not report bullying at all, for those who did, most confided in particular teachers they identified as trustworthy. Caution needs to be exercised with these findings because many students seeking support from a teacher also sought support elsewhere. This is supported by Moore and Maclean (2012). However, these findings indicate that the support and social systems in the school can either enable or disable bullying behaviours. Having supportive staff members who are aware of the nuances associated with bullying, as identified in this study, and who value and listen to students could open up further possibilities of students turning to teachers for support. Consequently, in the absence of parents, teachers can provide a safeguard to students who are worried about bullying issues.

Encouraging students to report bullying is an important part of a policy and it is what they are encouraged to do (Rigby, 2000; Oliver and Candappa, 2003; Moore and Maclean, 2012). Nonetheless if young people have to navigate a complex web when deciding to report bullying then it becomes very difficult for them to do so. This highlights the difficulties young people experience in their decision to report bullying. The importance of developing trusting relationships is paramount. Students fundamentally need to trust

the person they are reporting to, that they will take the situation seriously and act accordingly. How bullying is constructed for each student will be different in terms of the nuances of the episode, consequently each complaint needs to be handled in a sensitive and caring manner. Providing options for students, such as a variety of supporters they can approach in the form of peers or adults, could enable students to feel more confident to disclose bullying incidents. From the data, we recommended that flexible support be provided at *The Olive Tree School*.⁸⁹

The dilemma students face in deciding to report bullying is complicated but adults and students can work together to unravel this complex web and conceptualise reporting bullying in a different way.

10.4 ‘Snitching’ or ‘telling’?

Not everybody who reports unfair behaviour is considered a ‘snitch’. Waldoff and Weiss (2010), note that some people have been celebrated for their courage to report injustice, such as Erin Brockovich who reported water companies for contaminating a water supply. Waldoff and Weiss (2010:185-186) further acknowledge that Hollywood has portrayed such individuals as

“...selfless and brave individuals whose actions protect communities from the corruption and exploitation of big business”.

Consequently, if students decided to ‘snitch’ because they felt it was the right thing to do then they could be perceived as heroes in interrupting unfair harassment in school. Rather than students who report bullying being perceived as ‘snitches’, adults (teachers and parents) need to work with students to enable them to perceive the differences between ‘snitching’ and ‘telling’. Noftz (2011) suggests that adults need to encourage young people to report the injustices or unfair behaviour they witness or are victims to:

“Telling an adult and reporting an injustice is not tattling or snitching. It is the right thing to do!”

Noftz (2011) further proposes that young people need to be educated about the differences between ‘snitching’ and ‘telling’. She suggests that a student ‘tells’ an adult to protect somebody else but that they ‘snitch’ to get somebody else into trouble. In the context of *The Olive Tree School* therefore, there was nothing received from snitching on another so the term ‘snitch’ was a misused term.

⁸⁹ Please see section 10.5 for a full discussion on cycle three.

The construction of the language we use plays an important role in social constructionism (Burr, 2003; King and Horrocks, 2010). This discussion chapter has shown that students at *The Olive Tree School* were using language originating in American gang culture in the form of the 'snitch' to describe the repercussions they would potentially experience as a result of reporting bullying in school. However by turning this on its head and constructing the meanings behind 'snitching' and 'telling' together with the students of the school, adults can understand how young people conceptualise these terms. Accordingly this can enable teachers to work with students to think about and conceptualise what 'snitching' is as opposed to 'telling'. Promoting an ethos that encourages fairness and intervention when a situation is perceived as unjust or unfair along with a supportive culture could encourage students to seek support. In addition, teachers need to work with students around their constructions of 'fair' and 'unfair' behaviour. Teachers need to understand the nuances and complexities students add to these constructs as opposed to conceptualising them entirely within the realms of adult understanding.

The complexity I am adding to the debate around the construction of reporting bullying sheds light on this already difficult decision for students. The model in FIGURE 10.1 shows that students also have to construct what it means to be loyal and do the right thing, before making a decision to report bullying. We can liken this to the heroics of whistleblowers, which could enable students to perceive that reporting unjust behaviour is the right thing to do as opposed to 'snitching' in order to get somebody else into trouble. The 'snitch', according to the literature, has been perceived negatively but 'whistleblowing' can have a different connotation and be perceived as positive.

The second part of this chapter will focus on the draft anti-bullying policy which forms cycle three of this PAR project.

10.5 The draft anti-bullying strategy (cycle three)

The intention of PAR is to result in an action, change or improvement on the issue that is being researched (Pain et al. 2012). Consequently, the final cycle of this PAR process focussed on the development of a draft anti-bullying strategy, which was the tangible 'action' from the project (Please see appendix 18 for the full draft strategy). The draft strategy was designed to ensure that the ideas, viewpoints and recommendations gathered from participants were collated in a physical document that the school could

develop and work from once the research had ended. Subsequently, the work of the project continued although the research had ended.

It was important for this research that the decided 'action' was designed based on the actual perspectives of the research participants and the participatory process and not underpinned entirely by my perspectives (James, 2007). Through rigorously exploring the data and the process, the research team together decided that developing a draft anti-bullying strategy should be a tangible 'action' from this project. Fielding (2001:106) proposes:

“If there is one lesson to be learned from both the history of student voice initiatives and from the new wave of current research and development work it is that action is necessary.”

As this action was envisioned for continuous purposes and not a 'one-off' event, the strategy was intended to remain in draft format so it could be constantly revisited and revised by the school community. It was therefore organic and fluid and seen within the context in which bullying was happening.

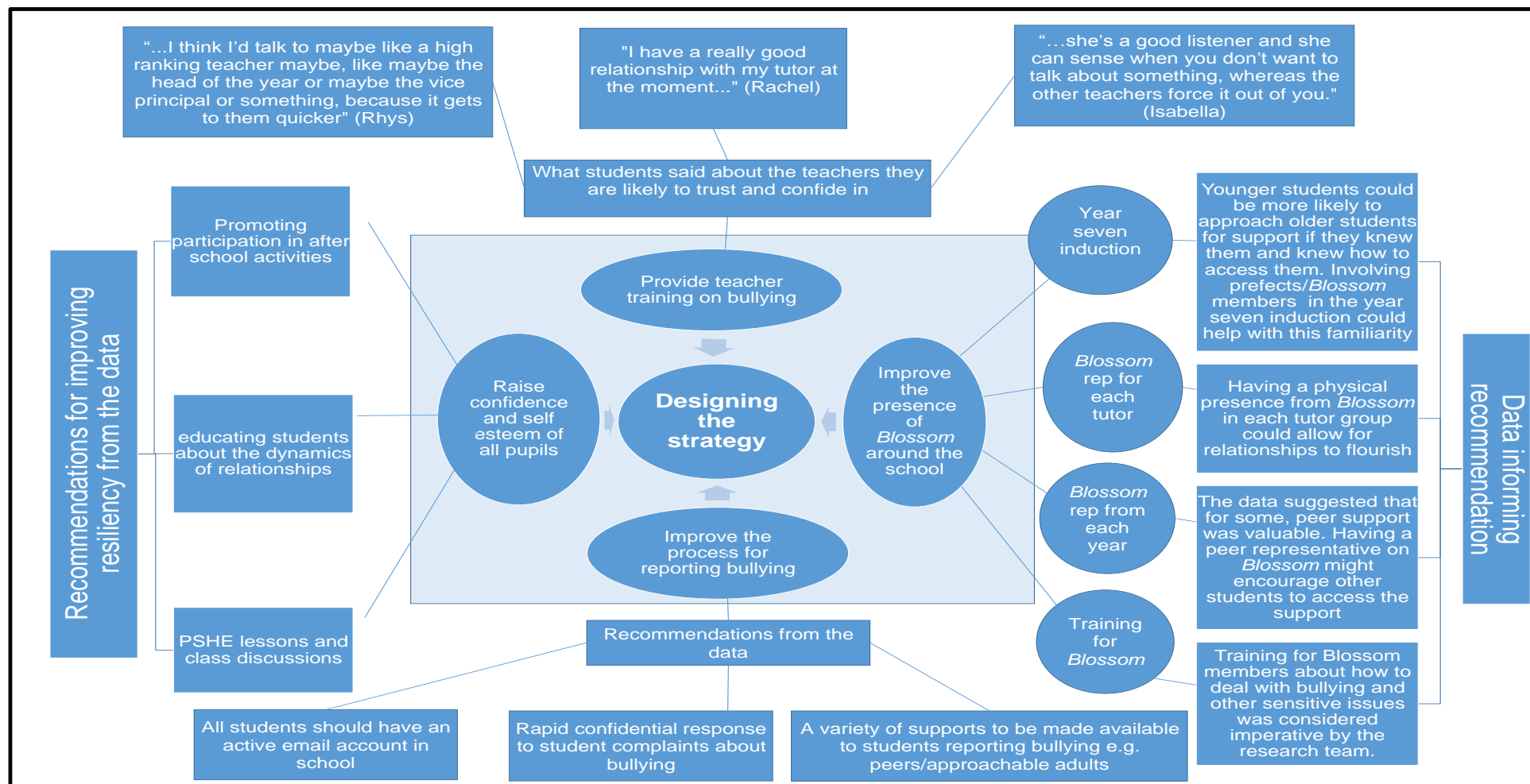
As the project evolved, over the previous two PAR cycles, and as we planned, acted, observed and reflected (Lewin, 1946) we made recommendations to the school. Feedback on these recommendations and our generated knowledge enabled us to attempt to influence changes in how the school dealt with bullying.

10.5.1 Developing the draft strategy

In developing the draft strategy, R4U felt “*we should include the actual words that students used*” (Patrick), to elicit our findings and to underpin where our recommendations were rooted. Using these “actual words” demonstrated the authenticity of the action and evidenced how the voice of participants were used to inform the action (James, 2007). The foundations of our recommendations have their roots in the ethos of social constructionism and how these students were active participants in understanding and constructing knowledge about their lives. The draft strategy had four main objectives (please see Figure 10.2 below):

- To improve the presence of *Blossom* in school
- To provide teacher training on bullying
- To improve the processes for reporting bullying
- To raise the confidence and self-esteem of all pupils

Figure 10.2: Designing the draft anti-bullying strategy*



*This process of designing the draft strategy, based on the findings from the study, took place alongside the data analysis in cycle 2. I returned to the school after 12 months to see if the draft strategy (appendix 18) had been implemented. I also supported R4U to write their own (unpublished) paper from the study (appendix 19).

In developing the draft strategy, the research team were challenging the status quo of the school in recommending, from student voice research, that changes needed to be made. Bragg and Fielding (2005) argue that students should be able to change or influence how schools develop. They propose that allowing students to have this space respects their agency and autonomy. Alanen (2011) suggests that this idea allows for the production of knowledge by children themselves by listening to children's viewpoints thus leading to improvements to their overall well-being. Consequently we begin to recognise that children are individuals alongside adults and not separate from them. By actively and positively including the voices of the students as research participants and researchers in the development of the draft strategy through meaningful discussions and activities about what it is that they want from a school anti-bullying policy, this research has laid the foundations for future discourses about students as social actors to take place at the school.

In support of recognising children as socially active, Fielding (2004) and Hendrick (2008) propose that children need to be provided with opportunities and spaces so they can be viewed as being capable of social action by adults. Likewise, the adults supporting these children need to view themselves as being in an equal relationship with children rather than one determined by power relations (Fielding, 2004; Hendrick, 2008). Working with students as researchers provides this needed space. Bragg and Fielding (2005) suggest that through this process students are invited to form constructive partnerships with their teachers where they can work together to determine what is working well in school and what needs to be improved. Through the process of PAR, R4U were provided with multiple opportunities to explore their research questions in a safe space. However, this collaboration and collegial knowledge was not intended to be a 'one off' event and it was intended for students and teachers to work together afterwards to implement the draft anti-bullying strategy. Consequently, adults are encouraged to recognise that power does not need to be hierarchical and one dimensional (adult over child) but instead can be fluid and ever changing – adult over child; child over adult; adult and child together (Martin, 1996; Christensen, 2004). It is not a suggestion of this research that adults step away while students work alone, rather it is the recognition that adults have a role to play in supporting the students in further research and in working collaboratively and collegially to implement the draft strategy. These conceptualisations recognise a core value of the sociology of childhood:

“Children are and must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live. Children are not just the passive subjects of social structures and processes.” (James and Prout, 1997:8)

In discussions about developing the draft strategy, Taha suggested *“Even if it helps just one person it’s worth it”*.

10.5.2 Insider knowledge

Decisions and actions in developing this strategy were not solely as a result of the research findings but also underpinned by the insider knowledge R4U had about the school and the interpretations they were able to provide on the data as a result. R4U had contextual knowledge, as boarders and day students, about the extent of the bullying problem in the school and their own views on how it should be addressed (Bland and Atweh, 2007). Additionally, R4U members had insider knowledge about the immediate and long term problems in tackling bullying that our draft strategy could potentially address. An example of this can be seen in the lack of training for both *Blossom* members and the staff team. Training for *Blossom* members about how to deal with bullying and other sensitive issues was considered imperative by R4U. Hanik, as a *Blossom* representative, said they had not received any training on how to deal with sensitive issues raised by students: *“about 30 seconds on child protection but that’s it”* (Hanik). Taha and Hanik both suggested that training for *Blossom* could build the confidence of members so they felt more prepared to deal with sensitive incidents.

Inconsistencies in the data around teacher support in bullying incidents, indicated to the research team that more teacher training was needed, so students could feel safe to report to teachers if they needed to. Amy proposed:

“Inset days would be the best time to provide training to teachers.” (Amy)

This was agreed by the team:

“At the beginning of the year the teachers could have the training and then they can have more training as the year goes on.” (Hope)

Providing teachers with effective, appropriate training could encourage them to think about how they handle incidences from students and how they themselves could be more approachable. Indeed, Novick and Isaacs (2010) suggest that some teachers could learn from others about how they deal with bullying in school.

10.5.3 Implementation

Once the draft strategy was written and agreed by all members of the research team it was given to the vice-principal for discussion with the senior management team and for implementation. The vice principal was also provided with drafts to comment on as the process evolved. This marked the end of the research project in terms of collecting and making sense of data as a research team. Marking the end of this process with R4U was very important. This project had been a large part of their lives for two academic years so at our last research meeting we had a celebration where I provided pizza and drinks. This was a time for us to reflect on what we had achieved and it was a reminder to R4U of the hard work they had done.⁹⁰ Although the research had ended, the 'action' continued for R4U and the vice principal in implementing the draft anti-bullying strategy. I then left the school and returned twelve months later to explore if any of the recommendations had been initiated or indeed implemented.

When I returned to the school I met with R4U and the vice-principal who had been supporting the project from its inception. Hanik and Taha were now in year thirteen and Hanik was the new Chaplaincy head boy and Taha the deputy head boy (both *Blossom* members) and were working to promote the recommendations in the draft anti-bullying strategy. Patrick was in year twelve and Amy and Hope were in year eleven but none of them were *Blossom* members. As a result of this research, and other work, a number of our recommendations had been actioned including some teacher training, the induction of year seven pupils, the improved visibility of *Blossom* in the school and visits from *Blossom* representatives to each year group without adults present:

“Only when appropriate and in extreme cases will there be staff input.” (*The Olive Tree School* website)

This PAR project allowed for the establishment of a collaboration between adults in the school and the pupils by designing a tangible 'action' that they could implement and develop together. The fundamentals of hearing the student voice and actively including this voice in school and policy initiatives was enabled to continue despite the research coming to an end. If schools are open to actively and genuinely including the voices of students in future policy development, they will have access to the students' insider knowledge and therefore put student voice at the centre of what they do (Bland and Atweh, 2007).

⁹⁰ See chapter 8, section 8.4.1 for more details

A limitation of this work from its inception was the reluctance of staff at *The Olive Tree School* to fully participate in the process and although R4U were disappointed with the overall participation of adults in the project, they were confident that those in senior positions would take the strategy seriously and acknowledge the organic process which provided these in-depth findings. Consequently implementing these recommendations showed a level of respect and appreciation for what the students regarded as the core bullying issue and how they wanted this to be addressed.

10.6 Chapter summary

This study supports the emerging theory that bullying is socially constructed but equally acknowledges that bullying among young people can be more nuanced than adults understand. Although the literature acknowledges differences in perceptions between adults and children about what bullying might be, this study has identified differences between students themselves and how they perceive bullying behaviour.

Students in the study agreed that serious bullying involved physical abuse. However they differed in their individual constructs about what happened in a bullying situation including the intention of the bully and the perception of the victim and how this determined the seriousness of other bullying situations such as verbal bullying and social exclusion. Adults however had a blanket approach, suggesting that all bullying was serious. This finding highlights the need to rethink how bullying is understood in schools by including the views of students rather than being confined to a set of parameters defined by adults. Consequently actively listening to students viewpoints about bullying is significant for understanding more about its social construction and the nuances young people add.

The term 'snitch' was a misused term at *The Olive Tree School* but it illuminates the complexities associated with reporting bullying. Loyalty, trust and doing the right thing all impacted, in some way, upon a student's decision to 'snitch' or 'not to snitch'. This study highlights that adults need to listen carefully to what it is that children are telling us about bullying by actively involving them in open dialogue. We can then begin to get a better understanding of the complexities involved in a bullying encounter. In addition, understanding how 'telling' and 'snitching' are conceptualised by students through open dialogue can enable adults to educate students about these differences and encourage them to do the right thing.

Exploring the concepts of 'serious bullying' and 'snitching' in the wider literature such as criminology and domestic violence for example, can open up childhood research to include these broader areas.

This chapter has ended with a critical discussion of cycle three. This cycle showed how the involvement of R4U through the PAR process led to the development of a tangible 'action' for the school, suggested to always be in draft format and to incorporate change as the need arises.

Chapter eleven will provide a critical discussion on the participatory process overall, reflecting on the evaluations conducted during cycles one and two. Chapter twelve concludes this thesis.

Participation

Chapter 11: Critical discussion of the participatory process

11.1 Introduction

In the previous three parts of this PhD thesis I have discussed the contextual literature, the methodological framework and the process and findings across three cycles of PAR. I have also presented and critiqued three participation evaluations conducted in the first two cycles. This final part of the thesis presents a critical review of participation throughout the project incorporating findings from the evaluations with key literature.

11.2 Participation discussion

The three evaluations showed that participation was varied and complex. Individual and collective interpretations of participation were evident which illuminated the ethics and value base for the study acknowledging that meanings associated with participation are varied and multiple. As the project evolved I came to understand participation in a more nuanced way and each evaluation led to and built on a critical review of participation in the project.

Within the confines of this doctoral thesis, participation is observed as being characteristic of the following:

1. Decision-making is more than the end result
2. The adult plays an active role in the process
3. Young people have an active and valid contribution to make as researchers

11.2.1 Decision-making is more than the end result

Evaluation one concluded that R4U did not perceive their role in decision-making as active if they were not present when the decision was made. As the project evolved, R4U were able to recognise how their ideas, views and opinions fed into the decision-making process. An example of this change in thought can be seen with Patrick; in evaluation one Patrick stated that he had had little involvement in the questionnaire design but in evaluation two he named himself and two others as active in this process and plotted to the right of the continuum. In addition, Taha and Hanik had to step back from the research during their exams but they had made an active contribution both before and after this time and both boys perceived themselves as being fully involved in the research process and ultimately in the decision-making and outcomes process.

McIntyre (2008) discusses the importance of developing a consensus of what the group understands participation to mean. She focuses on quality of participation rather than quantity in terms of the number of meetings attended. The visual representation of what participation looked like in the project, through the extension of the DMP, helped facilitate the group's understanding of participation and indeed its quality. In fact, using the tool at the outset would capture a baseline of who the adults and children anticipate will have the ideas, knowledge and control, which ultimately lead to the decisions. An evaluation at midpoint or at the end of the project could indicate if these perceptions came to fruition or changed in any way. Reflecting and acting on this activity allows adults and children to make changes based on what they observe. Looking across the pictorial representations of how R4U thought about their own levels of participation, differences in these perceptions are observed both on an individual and collective level depending on the research activity at that time. Consequently if we look at participation at each level of a research project a different picture can emerge as opposed to looking across the project in its entirety.

During the evaluation process and meeting discussions, R4U spoke about their desire for more games in their training and changes to data collection methods in cycle two. Through actively listening to what the young researchers said and providing feedback on how their input contributed to decisions, R4U saw that adults were willing to relinquish some of their power and work with them in a collaborative way, as is evidenced in other studies (Kirby et al., 2003b; Bragg and Fielding, 2005; Davey, 2010; Kellett, 2010b). Furthermore, adults need to be honest with children about how views, opinions and research findings are likely to impact on the overall decisions made (Sinclair, 2004). Meetings with the advisory group, where we presented ideas from the research, enabled R4U to speak with the vice-principal who was honest about what was possible within the realms of the school and the research.

Although there is an emphasis on collaborating with children on their terms, Kellett (2010b) advocates that listening to the views of children is not the same as involving them in the decision-making process. Mannion (2007) proposes that involving children in decision-making and actively hearing their voices is useful as a starting point. However traditionally, adults have made decisions about research without input from children, and Fox (2013) discusses how academic institutions are not usually aware of how children can actively participate in research and therefore constraints are in place

making their participation difficult. Mannion (2007; 2009) and Kellett (2010b) suggest that listening is dependent on adults relinquishing some of the control and power over decisions made during the research and suggest that if this is not realised then children are relying on adults to facilitate their views. Certainly children have criticised adults for not providing them with feedback about how their opinions influenced decisions (Davey, 2010). In evaluation three, the research team had a discussion about the differing views of participation in terms of how I viewed the activities and how they viewed them. This dialogue enabled us to see where perspectives were different but also how they all contributed to how decisions were made.

Feedback is an important aspect of the dialogue between young people and adults and should not be considered an added extra (Kirby et al., 2003b). These authors propose that feedback should happen in a dialogical exchange rather than in written form only. Through the use of three evaluations, R4U members were provided with opportunities to see how their input was contributing to a process of change and action not only in the research itself but also in the outcomes of the research. Feedback from the advisory group enabled R4U to see what a difference their research was making in the school. Participants also received verbal and written feedback through regular whole school assemblies, the research report, the school newsletter and draft anti-bullying strategy. This was important because Fielding (2004) and Randall (2012) proposes that children could decide not to participate in research if they perceive that their views will not be taken seriously or acted upon. Mannion (2009) and Randall (2012) thus suggest that the way adults communicate to children that they value their input will have an impact on how the findings from participatory research are understood.

Although participation in decision-making is not always about the end result, the process of decision-making incorporates relationship building where agreements and disagreements can take place in a safe space. Ideas and knowledge production are dependent on the contribution from all team members, that is, the children and adults who comprise the research team.

11.2.2 The adult plays an active role in the process

Recognising the multiple aspects in the decision-making process where children can actively be involved is an important element of the participatory process. However relationship building and realising the role played by adults in the process are also important. Relationships between adult and child were fundamental for my working

relationship with R4U. Evaluation three allowed me to reflect on my role in the participatory process. I realised that providing opportunities for R4U to make decisions without me was not the aim of this project. This project would not have been the success it was if it was not for R4U. However my role in the process was equally important. Mannion (2007) discusses the relationships between adults and children where the adult cannot be 'cut out' in terms of how young people participate. Kellett (2010b) reiterates this and suggests that a limitation of child-led research is that children still require support from adults, not only for the research process but also for dissemination activities where adults can provide access to wider (adult) audiences.

Fielding (2004) and Mannion (2007) proposes that adults need to consider how the research spaces, and spaces for children more generally, are co-constructed by the actions of the adults who work with them. These relationships are key for determining which children get heard, what ideas children can talk about and what differences this process will make to the adult-child relationship (Mannion, 2007; Fitzgerald et al., 2009). In this doctoral study, the research team relied on adults in many ways. Firstly, R4U relied on me to initially facilitate the participatory process and guide the research. Secondly the full team were reliant on other adults, in the form of parents and staff to participate in data collection and adult-gatekeepers in the form of school authorities. Relationships between adults and children were tested on numerous occasions. In cycle one, many adults chose not to participate in the research by not completing a questionnaire or offering their views. This left team members despondent, as gaps were evident in our data. We wanted to ensure that we captured the viewpoints of all stakeholders because the research team wanted to hear adult views too, recognising these as important alongside students' views. This recognition enabled the research team to encourage adult participation in cycle two whilst respecting the wishes of adults who chose not to participate. In essence a role reversal was noted as students were implementing measures so adults could participate on their own terms.

During the project, challenges were presented to relationships between adults and children in the process of dissemination. Presentations were cancelled due to (adult) changes in the timetable and publishing the work was hindered by adults not responding and taking the work forward. Indeed compromises had to be made between adults and children at some points as reflected in our recommendations to lower the age of representation on *Blossom*. Percy-Smith (2015) recognises that participation is more

about the process of democracy where people work together to make decisions and influence change rather than always being about having a say. In essence the quality of the relationships between adults and children and how they actively collaborate is the main component to children's participation (Fielding, 2004; Percy-Smith, 2015).

Despite these barriers, adult-child relationships were an important aspect of this research. Adults allowed the research to take place in the school; adults provided us with lunch and a room to work from and subsequently worked with us to design the draft anti-bullying strategy. Adult-child relations were further strengthened through the work with the advisory group. At times these meetings were challenging as compromises needed to be reached on what was taken forward.

Mannion (2007) and Raffety (2014) consider children researching children. They propose that just because children are involved in conducting their own research, the process might not necessarily expand children's participation and autonomy, nor might this process address power differentials between adults and children. Raffety (2014) discusses researchers' acknowledgements of the social differences between adult researcher and children in the research field. I acknowledged these differences from the outset; I was aware that I was an adult working with young people and therefore I was perceived as an authority figure. In the beginning, R4U insisted on calling me 'Mrs O'Brien' rather than 'Niamh'. I explained to them that I was not there in a teaching capacity but to conduct this research in partnership with them. Calling me 'Mrs O'Brien' puts me in charge so they reluctantly agreed to call me 'Niamh'. It was obvious that some members were initially uncomfortable with this:

"They won't be happy here with us not addressing you as Mrs" (Hanik).

By the end of the project the perception R4U had of me in a teacher role had changed. We discussed at one meeting towards the end of the project how the role I had in our research team might be considered alongside that of a teacher:

"It's not like you're a teacher because you're learning from us and we're learning from you. With teachers it's just one way" (Hanik)

This change in perception enabled R4U to perceive my role differently, not that as a facilitator or teacher but as a team member with an equal contribution to make, thus minimising the social differences between adults and young people (Randall, 2012; Raffety, 2014).

Another way I perceived this social difference was in terms of my own schooling and background. I did not receive a private schooling education and I come from a working class background. The students I was working with came from affluence. However all members of the team were passionate about tackling bullying at the school. I was bullied myself at university once I had left home so there was a part of me that could empathise and understand some of the stories I was hearing through the process of this research. Raffety (2014) goes on to suggest that researchers need to embrace these social differences which attempt to lessen differences between adults and children but at the same time they reify these differences (adult-child power dynamics for example). Raffety (2014) suggests that:

“...a strategy of minimizing social distance involve the suspension of control on the part of the researcher, which allows for the greater apprehension of the social rules of the community, enabling the researcher’s relations to inform understandings of contextually specific social difference. This strategy differs from that of minimizing social difference, which inevitably presumes control to be located in the researcher and the research design, and tends to reproduce understandings of difference from the perspective of the researcher rather than the informant or the child. (Raffety, 2014: 9).

11.2.3 Young people have an active and valid contribution to make as researchers

Although the benefits of involving children in democratic decision-making are appreciated, power and control over decision-making is still fundamentally adult-led (Percy-Smith, 2015). In other words, children participate because adults allow them to and not because it is a part of everyday working. Fox (2013), however, suggests that larger academic institutions do not appreciate the unique contribution children can make to research and in an effort to protect children they are in fact excluding them from the process of knowledge production. Percy-Smith (2015:3) proposes that for children to be able to participate effectively the emphasis needs to be placed on “*social participation*” (*italics in original*). Hence we begin to recognise the many ways children participate fully in everyday life through:

“...their actions, choices, relationships and contribution” (Percy-Smith, 2015:3).

Through the process of this research, R4U were determined to leave behind a legacy recognising the contribution they made to tackling bullying in school, evident through the school accepting the draft anti-bullying strategy. These initiatives show how the work continues after the research has ended (O’Brien, 2014).

Although the benefits of involving children in participatory activities is recognised in the literature (Percy-Smith, 2006, Kellett, 2010a; Moules and O'Brien, 2016), Percy-Smith (2015:3) suggests that these changes have had limited impact "on the position of children and young people in society." Kirby et al. (2003b) and Coad and Shaw (2008) suggest that although children want more involvement in planning and developing appropriate services, there is limited evaluative research on whether these choices are acted upon and whether they inform any positive future changes in service delivery. A key aspect of this doctoral project was to develop an action that would continue the work of the project once the research had ended. Following implementation of the draft anti-bullying strategy I visited the school a year later and witnessed how the recommendations had been taken forward and how the students were being encouraged to participate in democratic decision-making on a regular basis through *Blossom* and the support of the school prefects.

The training provided for R4U was tailored to the needs of this project and Kellett (2010b) suggests that generic in-depth research training provided to children, which they can draw upon to initiate their own projects, shifts the power imbalance towards children. In this case, children are leading their own projects with support from adults but adults are not managing the research. This shift in power was evident in evaluation two through the process of decision-making and again in evaluation three when R4U members disagreed with me about my interpretation of where the participation happened. Using the fourth dimension '*knowledge*' in the proposed double-extension of the DMP changed the dynamics of participation again, acknowledging this activity as dynamic and fluid. The contribution made by R4U in terms of their unique insider knowledge added to the depth of the findings where we captured a collective picture of the bullying issues in the school but at the same time encapsulated individual unique stories from each of our participants.

Time was limited in this project, which prevented further training, however evidence from R4U shows that they have been able to use their new found skills for other work. Hanik for example, carried out his own enquiry as part of a university entry assessment, Amy understood differences between qualitative and quantitative enquiry and Hope felt she became an effective listener.

Throughout this study every effort was made to share control and power over the process including the interpretation of what students were telling us. It was acknowledged that R4U not only had a say in how the decisions were made but that their input in terms of

their ideas and unique knowledge contribution was pivotal to this study. That power can be shared was evident from evaluation two. However there were times when the power was in favour of me such as at the beginning of the project and during the training programme as at this time I was the team member who had the knowledge. Kirby et al. (2003b) suggest that in developing relationships between adults and young people, a redress of power is needed.

11.3 Chapter summary

This chapter presented a critical discussion of the participatory process. Understanding that decision-making is a process that is more than the end result is reflected here. This chapter has stressed the fluidity of participation from task to task and that the overall decision-making picture could be different from the pictures captured at various moments during the process. This was evident in how perceptions changed over the three evaluations.

This chapter has recognised that adults play an active role in the participatory process. Acknowledging this role, adds to our understanding of children's participation. Finally, this chapter has emphasised that young people have an active and valid contribution to make as researchers and with the right training and sharing of power they can play an active part in the generation of new knowledge pertinent to them.

Chapter twelve will conclude this thesis.

Chapter 12: Conclusions

12.1 Introduction

The intention of this doctoral research was to explore bullying in a single private day and boarding school and to ascertain the core bullying issue as identified by the students themselves. The study used a PAR framework rooted in the philosophy of social constructionism and the thesis presents two cycles of research where the original contributions to knowledge rest. Cycle one was exploratory and allowed for the recruitment and development of the research team. This cycle highlighted the social construction of bullying and recognised the many nuances which enabled students to conceptualise bullying. Sometimes these conceptualisations were different from those of adults and at other times differences were apparent between young people themselves in how they recognised bullying. During this cycle we identified the issues of enquiry for cycle two, namely what constituted 'serious bullying' at this school and the concept of the 'snitch'. Cycle two explored these concepts and allowed for further involvement from R4U through conducting interviews and contributing further to data analysis, ultimately resulting in the development of a draft anti-bullying strategy for their school.

This chapter presents how my understanding of bullying has shifted as a result of this research, the limitations of the study and the two original contributions to knowledge in the form of the subject and the methodology. I then suggest areas for further research before closing the thesis with a brief summary.

12.2 Understanding bullying

The literature reviewed in this thesis has shown that a shift has occurred in understanding bullying with regards to individual traits (*paradigm one*) to understanding more about group dynamics and social construction (*paradigm two*). What this thesis adds however is understanding more about the nuances apparent in bullying encounters from the perspective of young people themselves. This study recognises that adults and children can differ in their understanding of social phenomena and that even where there is some agreement there can be differences in understanding the context or the degree of a possible situation (La Fontaine, 1991; Fielding, 2004; James, 2007). Adults and children can also think similarly, which shows that not everything is a social construct but rather an agreed reality. In my study for example, some behaviours were factually considered to be bullying by both adults and students as can be seen in the case of physical aggression. However, the study has also shown that in order to understand

bullying, the context to which it arises needs to be taken into account. For students at this school, bullying is a fluid concept which changes from location to location. The wider literature also demonstrates that understanding and conceptions about bullying can fluctuate with regards to age, gender, culture and so on. My study also highlighted the static position that adults tend to take with regard to understanding bullying, probably based on their own past experiences (parents) and/or the need to deal with it on a regular basis and maintain good behaviour at school (teachers).

My own understanding of bullying has shifted during the course of this work. Although I recognise the value young people can add to our understanding of social phenomena by adding their own life experiences that adults simply do not have, I assumed this study would simply unearth that adults and young people think differently about bullying. However the findings and the learning through the process of participation not only enabled me to see that there are similarities and differences in understanding bullying, but that both viewpoints need to be respected. As young people are positioned to actually experience this phenomena as opposed to adult positions, the voice of the young people needs to take prominence. Adults or children are not wrong in how they individually or collectively perceive bullying but there is a need to branch out from large cohort studies which focus on issues defined by adults and produce more generalised findings. Gathering data from smaller scale participatory projects involving adults and children in reciprocal partnerships, each willing to learn from each other, can add to our understanding of the nuances around bullying and how adults can respond to these.

This study therefore illuminates the nuances apparent in how bullying is conceptualised. Simply categorising our understanding into two separate paradigms might not be useful in understanding more about the phenomena but combining the two positions could be a way forward.

12.3 Limitations of the study

This study was not without its limitations. Undeniably a limitation of this study was not being able to have in-depth conversations with all participants. This approach may have added another layer to understanding bullying at *The Olive Tree School*. However I also recognise that this was an unfunded study with time and financial constraints and using a questionnaire to gather baseline data enabled all members of the school community to participate and contribute. In addition, this data allowed us to generate questions for the qualitative aspects of the study.

I recognise that the absent voices of adults in cycle one does not allow for a whole school study in this exploratory stage. Although many measures were put in place to enable participation from adults in this first cycle we were not successful in this recruitment. In cycle two we changed our approach by using different methods to attract adults to the study resulting in a much enhanced response rate, although we would have welcomed more participation from the school staff. Fielding (2004) emphasises that for transformation to occur in how we work together and understand what it is to be a teacher or what it is to be a student, a partnership needs to develop. This partnership requires the active involvement of both teachers and students without the exclusion of teachers or the involvement of students as a 'tick box' exercise. Unless this partnership is able to develop, Fielding (2004) stipulates that there will be limited success with even less chance of sustainability and no chance of transformation. He proposes that student voice requires early involvement from key staff and openness from others. Indeed Fielding (2004) notes that students have some spaces where they can make or impact on decisions in school and teachers have their spaces to do the same (and more), and they will enter each other's space at particular times such as a student attending a staff meeting or a teacher attending the school council. Kellett (2010) argues that the idea of students actually having a say and working alongside adults is an exception rather than the norm and it remains unusual for adults and children to work together as equals to decide and implement change and even make sense of their work together. Fielding (2004:309) suggests, unless this changes transformation will "...remain rhetorical rather than real". Throughout the project it was difficult to capture views from adults. However as we came towards the end of the project we began to witness more dedicated teacher involvement. This was particularly so in the form of the draft anti-bullying strategy and the response from the vice principal in terms of a commitment to work with the students and to implement some of the recommendations made by the participants through the research. By the end of the project R4U themselves had a closer working relationship with some teachers and witnessed a change in how they were viewed by the teachers as students of the school with valuable information about their school and their ideas for change and improvements.

This study sought views from 70 boys (27 boarders and 43 day students) and 85 girls (21 boarders and 64 day students) and as more girls participated overall, they were consequently over-represented in the qualitative aspect of the research. In cycle two, eight girls and one boy participated in the interviews so the voice of boys is limited in this

rich data. Although the questionnaires enabled us to find out who boys reported bullying to and whether or not they were fearful of being labelled as a snitch for example, this data did not tell us *why* these boys reported or did not report bullying in school. As such, the qualitative data in cycle two is heavily in favour of reflecting the perspectives of girls. Conversely, the data were analysed by the research team and three of the five members were boys; therefore the voice of boys was firmly embedded in data analysis.

In cycle two we did not ask participants about their experiences of bullying (been bullied, bullied others, witnessed bullying, none of the above) in the questionnaire. This would have helped in analysing the data about whether or not students reported bullying and why they chose that particular option. Nevertheless, using semi-structured interviews in a relaxed environment with pizza and refreshments enabled students to speak in conversation and to tell us about their own individual experiences. This process allowed for rich data to flourish.

12.4 Original contribution

This thesis offers two important contributions, firstly to the field of bullying research, and secondly, to the involvement of young people in research on a broader level. These contributions can be seen in terms of the subject matter and the methodological approach.

Subject

This study contributes to our understanding of the complexities of the decision-making process that students need to negotiate in their decision to report or 'snitch' about bullying behaviour in school. In essence, students navigate a complex web in their decision to 'snitch' about bullying in school. Firstly, students needed to decide if the behaviour they had witnessed or experienced was in fact bullying. This study found that bullying was conceptualised differently, not only between adults and students of the school, but also between students themselves, thus highlighting the many nuances apparent in a bullying encounter.

Secondly, students had to decide if the bullying was serious enough to 'snitch' about. In this school, the students always perceived physical bullying as serious, but with other bullying forms such as verbal abuse and social exclusion for example, what determined serious and 'not serious' bullying was largely determined by the intention of the bully and

the perception of the recipient. This varied however between day and boarding students where boarders were more likely to suggest bullying was a rarity.

Thirdly, students needed to determine if reporting the bullying was the right thing to do. This decision to 'snitch' was influenced by the loyalty the students felt to their friendship group and their position within this group; their loyalty to the perceived bully and the perceived repercussions of 'snitching'; and finally the decision was influenced by whether 'snitching' was right for the bullied student (or themselves if they experienced the bullying).

If a student decided that 'snitching' was the right thing to do, their final decision was in relation to who they would 'snitch' to. For those students who made the decision to 'snitch', most confided in particular teachers. The decision to choose these teachers was largely influenced by how supportive they were and whether they had the authority to make changes to the bullying situation. Ultimately students needed to trust those they were reporting to.

A student's decision to seek support about bullying therefore, was largely determined by how they conceptualised the 'snitch'. This study has argued that adults (teachers and parents) need to work with students to enable them to perceive the differences between 'snitching' and 'telling'. Constructing meanings together could enable adults to understand how students conceptualise these terms. Promoting an ethos that encourages fairness and intervention when a situation is perceived as unjust or unfair along with a supportive culture could encourage students to seek support.

Methodological

This thesis has added two new dimensions to the Dual-axis Model of Participation (DMP) (Moules and O'Brien, 2012). The DMP starts from the premise that participation is happening and takes place within the confines of what is possible both institutionally and culturally. The original DMP (Moules and O'Brien, 2012), focuses on two dimensions of participation: '*decision-making*' and '*initiation and direction*' and as a project evolves the balance of each is with the adult or the young person or this balance can be shared. This thesis expands this model by adding two further dimensions '*ideas*' and '*knowledge*'. Through the process of three evaluations it became clear that participation in decision-making and action is more than just the end result. Decision-making includes a process

of generating ideas, discussing the ideas and reaching a decision on what to do together. It also includes having the freedom to suggest ideas whilst being enabled to agree or disagree with others in a safe space. Therefore adding 'ideas' to the model demonstrates how the construction of ideas feeds into the overall decision-making process. The 'knowledge' dimension recognises the unique contribution from each member of the team whether they are child or adult. Using this model to evaluate participation in the project showed that the participation of the group members moved fluidly from adult-led, child-led and shared depending on the context to which it arose.

12.5 Future research

Three areas of further research are identified below as a result of the process and findings from this study:

1. The need to understand why students use the term 'snitching' to report bullying is an area worthy of further research. Such a project could enable adults to work with students to explore this concept fully and understand what they mean by the use of this term.
2. Indeed a possibility of further research is developing an understanding of *paradigm one* concepts combined with *paradigm two* concepts to create a robust understanding of bullying. There is a possibility that teachers understand bullying in terms of individual characters (*paradigm one*) whilst students understand the social construction of the phenomenon (*paradigm two*), as they offer a more nuanced understanding of the concepts.
3. Another area for further research identified through the course of the literature review is that of girls in private day and boarding schools. In the literature search I did not identify any study, which focussed solely on the perceptions of girls. Studies focussing on boys however were evident.

12.6 Thesis conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated the importance of actively including students in exploring bullying issues in their school. This approach is lacking in the literature about bullying in private day and boarding schools. Furthermore this thesis recognises the many nuances specific to bullying which students have a unique knowledge about. Having a methodology that complements the ethos of listening to students' own understandings

of bullying as this doctoral study did, can enable us to begin to reframe not only the way we conceptualise bullying but consequently how we develop effective strategies for addressing it.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Some specialist organisations providing bullying advice and support

- **The Anti-Bullying Alliance** was founded by the NSPCC and NCB in 2002 and encompasses a network of over 100 organisations to develop and share good practice on all bullying related issues (DfE, 2012). Price Waterhouse Cooper (2007) in evaluating the work of ABA noted that one of the most prominent initiatives launched by the network is anti-bullying week which runs annually in November. The purpose of this week is to raise awareness of bullying and motivate schools to re-develop and update their anti-bullying initiatives.
- **Beatbullying** was a charity directly working with young people. They produced lesson plans and resources for parents. Within this charity sat cybermentors, established to provide online peer support to young people about cyberbullying (DfE, 2012). Beatbullying went into administration in October 2014.
- **Kidscape** was established to address bullying and child protection. This charity provides advice, support and training to professionals and parents concerned about bullying issues (DfE, 2012).

Appendix 2: Pros and cons of each research method/tool

Method	How it works	Positives	Negatives
Video camera:	Recording interviews/focus groups. Recording researchers thoughts	See what people are saying and capture body language.	People might be weary of the camera.
Questionnaire	Used to gather data from a large sample of people. Mainly used in quantitative research (tick the box) and in gathering demographic data (age, ethnic origin, year group etc.) but can be used for qualitative research when the questionnaire is asking people to provide more information.	Gather data from lots of people.	Everyone might not return them so can be quite small return rate.
Focus Group	Gather data from a group of people who come together to discuss the research topic and answer questions as a group. Video camera and tape recorder can be used to record the focus group (with permission) This is a qualitative method.	People talk in a conversational manner so they tell you more.	Some people might dominate the group. Some people might not talk.
Tape Recorder	Recording interviews/focus groups. Recording researchers thoughts	Good for recording the interview. More portable than a video recorder. Students feel better if only their voices are being recorded.	Unwanted sound picked up. Using them in a focus group can be difficult as you might not necessarily know who everyone is on the recording.
Suggestion box	For dropping comments into and	Good for anonymous responses.	Depends on where it is left as people might be

	gathering questionnaires.		weary of dropping off their questionnaires.
Reading	Doing the literature review which is crucial to the research process. This is about finding out what research has been done about the topic and finding out what else could be done (the gap).	We will have a better idea of what has gone on before and what we need to focus on.	It takes lots of time.
Interview	This is mostly a qualitative method where we can gather in-depth information from people. It can also be used in quantitative research where we can help people fill in questionnaires	We can potentially get more information from individual people in an interview as opposed to a focus group or questionnaire.	People might feel pressured to talk. Very time consuming (more so than focus group or questionnaire).
Ladder Rating Scale	Used in questionnaires/focus groups/interviews so participants can rate particular items e.g. asking about how someone feels about the way bullying is handled in school. The bottom of the ladder could represent 'no good, middle could say 'ok' and top could say 'brilliant'. Then participants could place where they feel on the ladder.	Good visual method	Participants could get confused about what it means if not explained properly.

Appendix 3: Ethical approval letter cycle one

Letter removed for confidentiality reasons.

Appendix 4: Cycle one pilot questionnaire

Pilot questionnaire: cycle one

Thank you for filling in our questionnaire about definitions and how bullying is dealt with at school. Please could you answer the following questions in relation to what you thought about it?

1. Introduction

Did you think the introduction was clear? (Please tick one box)

Very clear ☐

Clear ☐

Not very clear ☐

Is there anything you think we need to add/remove from the introduction?

2. Some information about you

How did you feel about answering these questions? (Please tick one box)

Happy to answer them ☐

A bit uncomfortable with some ☐

I did not like answering these questions ☐

If some questions were uncomfortable for you or you did not like answering some questions please can you tell us which questions they were:

3. *The Olive Tree School* definition of bullying

Did you like the way this question was phrased?

Yes ☐

Don't know ☐

No ☐

Do you have any comments about this question?

4. Your experience of how *The Olive Tree School* deals with bullying incidents.

What was your experience of completing this section? (Please tick all that apply)

Easy to follow ☐

Difficult to follow ☐

Not sure ☐

Too many questions ☐

Too little questions ☐

Anything else you would like to tell us about his section?

5 Thank you

Was this section clear?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Not sure ☐

6 How long did it take you to complete the questionnaire?

1-5 minutes ☐

5-10 minutes ☐

10-15 minutes ☐

7 Please tell us anything else you would like to about the questionnaire

Appendix 5: Survey monkey questionnaires: Students, parents and staff members (cycle one)

Appendix 5A: Student questionnaire

Research 4 U
1. Introduction
Welcome to our questionnaire
We are a group of student researchers at The Olive Tree School called R4U (Research 4 U). We are working with a researcher from Anglia Ruskin University and we need to hear your views!!!!!!!
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Would you like a say in how our school defines bullying?• Would you like to tell us how happy you are with the way The Olive Tree school deals with bullying incidents?• Would you like to tell us more about your own story and receive a £15 high street voucher as a thank you?
If so, the following questionnaire is for you.
This questionnaire is TOTALLY ANONYMOUS and you do not need to give us your name or contact details if you do not want to.
Still interested? Click the next button to get started.....
2. Some information about you
Please fill in this page fully as this information is very important
* 1. Are you a:
<input type="radio"/> Boy
<input type="radio"/> Girl
* 2. How old are you?
<input type="text"/>
* 3. What year are you in?
<input type="text"/>

Research 4 U

* 4. How would you describe your ethnic origin?

- ☐ Asian or Asian British
- ☐ Black or Black British
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ Mixed
- ☐ White British
- ☐ White Irish
- ☐ White Other
- ☐ Not Known
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Other ethnic group (please tell us)

* 5. Are you a:

- ☐ Full Boarder
- ☐ Flexi Boarder
- ☐ Weekly boarder
- ☐ Day student

3. The Olive Tree School definition of bullying

- The Olive Tree School uses the below definition to explain what bullying is and it is written in our journals.
- Please read it carefully.

The Olive Tree School bullying definition:

Bullying is when a student is repeatedly, and over a period of time, targeted by one or more students. Bullies intend to frighten, hurt, or threaten their victims. Bullying can take many forms, such as:

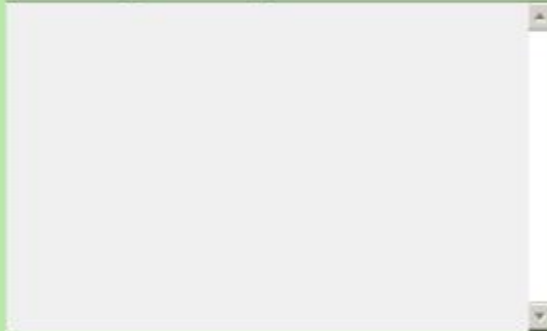
Teasing or name calling

- Malicious gossip
- Racial or sexual harassment
- Isolating a student from a friendship group
- Damaging or stealing property
- Hitting, punching and other physical abuse

Research 4 U

Bullies can use a range of methods and these include face-to-face, mobile phones, email, instant messaging or Internet message boards.

1. If you agree with the above definition of bullying please move to question 2. If however you don't agree with it please use this text box to add ANY changes you like.



* 2. I think the current Olive Tree School definition is fine as it is

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree so I have made changes above

4. Your experience of how The Olive Tree School deals with bullying incidents

1. In school, have you ever? (please tick all that apply)

- ☐ Been bullied
- ☐ Bullied others
- ☐ Witnessed bullying
- ☐ None of the above

5. Bullying experiences

1. Did you report the bullying?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

6. Reporting bullying

Research 4 U

1. Who did you report the bullying to (please tick all that apply)

☐

Teacher

☐

Another student

☐

School nurse

☐

School counsellor

☐

Member of Blossom

☐

Member of your family

Someone else (please tell us)

2. Were you happy with the outcome?

☐

Yes

☐

No

If yes what made you happy?

7. Unhappy response

1. If 'no' what made you unhappy?

8. Reporting bullying 2

1. Why did you not report the bullying?

9. Are you happy with the way bullying is handled in school?

1. Overall are you happy with the way The Olive Tree School deals with bullying?

☐

Yes

☐

No

Research 4 U

2. If you answered 'no' what do you think could be improved?

10. Final question

1. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about bullying at The Olive Tree school?

11. Thank you

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Your views and opinions will play a very important role in our research.

We are also recruiting new members to our research team!! If you would like to join please contact Niamh on 01245 493131 ext 4197 or email niamh.obrien@anglia.ac.uk

We would like to hear more about your experiences so if you would like to tell us your story and receive a £15 high street voucher as a thank you please fill in your details below.

Your details will only be used to contact you and WILL NOT be used in the research in any other way.

Many thanks
R4U

1. I would like to tell you more about my experience

☐ Yes

☐ No

2. If you would like to tell us your story please provide the following contact details: (Please give us at least one form of contact, either email or phone or both if you wish)

Your name

Your email address

Your phone number

Parents/carers questionnaire Cycle 1

1. Introduction

We are a group of student researchers at *The Olive Tree School* called R4U (Research 4 U) and we are working with a researcher from Anglia Ruskin University.

We are trying to find out what everybody thinks about the bullying definition in the school. As a result we are asking you as a parent/carers of an *Olive Tree School* student to tell us your views about the current bullying definition. We would also like to hear your views about whether or not you are happy with the current procedure for dealing with bullying

This questionnaire is **TOTALLY CONFIDENTIAL** and you do not need to give us your name or contact details if you do not want to. If however you would be willing to speak to us about your experiences of bullying in the school please provide your contact details. These details will only be used to contact you and not in any other way in the research.

Your views and opinions are very important to us so if you would like to have your say please click next.....

Parents/carers questionnaire Cycle 1

2. About you?

* 1. Are you?

- ☐ Male
☐ Female

* 2. How many children do you have enrolled at *The Olive Tree School*?

* 3. How would you describe your ethnic origin?

- ☐ Asian or Asian British
☐ Black or Black British
☐ Chinese
☐ Mixed
☐ White British
☐ White Irish
☐ White Other
☐ Not Known
☐ Prefer not to say

Other ethnic group (please tell us)

Parents/carers questionnaire Cycle 1

3. *The Olive Tree School* bullying definition

The Olive Tree School uses the below definition to explain what bullying is and it is written in the student journals. Please read it carefully.

The Olive Tree School bullying definition:

Bullying is when a student is repeatedly, and over a period of time, targeted by one or more students. Bullies intend to frighten, hurt, or threaten their victims. Bullying can take many forms, such as:

- Teasing or name calling
- Malicious gossip
- Racial or sexual harassment
- Isolating a student from a friendship group
- Damaging or stealing property
- Hitting, punching and other physical abuse

Bullies can use a range of methods and these include face-to-face, mobile phones, email, instant messaging or Internet message boards

1. If you agree with the above definition of bullying please move to question 2. If however you don't agree with it please use this text box to add ANY changes you like

* 2. I think the current definition is fine as it is

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree so I have made changes above

Parents/carers questionnaire Cycle 1

4. Your experience of how *The Olive Tree School* deals with bullying incidents

* 1. Have you ever reported to the School that your child has:

- ☐ Been bullied
- ☐ Bullied others
- ☐ Witnessed bullying
- ☐ None of the above

Parents/carers questionnaire Cycle 1

5. Reporting bullying

1. What did you do in this case?

2. Did you feel satisfied with the outcome?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If you ticked 'no' what do you think could have been done differently?

Parents/carers questionnaire Cycle 1

6. Level of satisfaction

1. Overall are you happy with the way *The Olive Tree School* deals with bullying?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If you ticked 'yes' please tell us more



Parents/carers questionnaire Cycle 1

7. Improvements

1. What do you think could be improved?

Parents/carers questionnaire Cycle 1

8. Final question

1. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about bullying at *The Olive Tree School*?

Parents/carers questionnaire cycle 1

9. Thank you

Thank you very much for completing our questionnaire, your views and opinions are very important for our research. If you would like to tell us more about your experience(s) please provide your contact details below.

Please note that your details will only be used to contact you and will not be used in any other way in the research

1. I would like to tell you more about my experience(s)

☐ Yes

☐ No

2. If you ticked 'yes' above please provide the following contact details: (please provide either your email address or phone number or both, if you wish, so we can contact you)

Your name

Your email

Your phone number

Appendix 5C: Staff questionnaire

Staff Member questionnaire

1. Introduction

Welcome to our questionnaire We are a group of student researchers at The Olive Tree School called R4U(Research 4you)

We are working with a researcher from Anglia Ruskin University.

We are asking you as a member of staff at The Olive Tree School to tell us your views about the bullying definition. We would also like to hear your views about whether or not you are happy with the current procedure for dealing with bullying

This questionnaire is TOTALLY CONFIDENTIAL and you do not need to give us your name or contact details if you do not want to. If however you would be willing to speak to us about your experiences of bullying in the school please provide your contact details. These details will only be used to contact you and not in any other way in the research.

Your views and opinions are very important to us so if you would like to have your say please click next.....

2. About you?

* 1. Are you?

☐

Male

☐

Female

Staff Member questionnaire

* 2. What is your role in The Olive Tree school? (please tick all that apply)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Admissions | <input type="checkbox"/> Head of Year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> After school care | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning and teaching support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bursary | <input type="checkbox"/> Librarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Catering | <input type="checkbox"/> Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom support | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical Centre |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Class tutor | <input type="checkbox"/> Midday Support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic | <input type="checkbox"/> Secretarial Support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Driver | <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Head of Department | |

Other (please specify)

* 3. How would you describe your ethnic origin?

- ☐ Asian or Asian British
- ☐ Black or Black British
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ Mixed
- ☐ White British
- ☐ White Irish
- ☐ White Other
- ☐ Not Known
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Other ethnic group (please tell us)

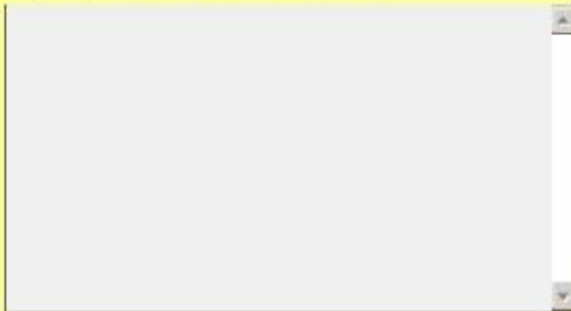
Staff Member questionnaire

*** 4. Do you have any responsibility for dealing with bullying issues within your role?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes please tell us about these responsibilities



3. The Olive Tree School bullying definition

The Olive Tree School uses the below definition to explain what bullying is and it is written in the student journals. Please read it carefully.

1. The Olive Tree School Bullying definition

Bullying is when a student is repeatedly, and over a period of time, targeted by one or more students. Bullies intend to frighten, hurt, or threaten their victims. Bullying can take many forms, such as:

- Teasing or name calling
- Malicious gossip
- Racial or sexual harassment
- Isolating a student from a friendship group
- Damaging or stealing property
- Hitting, punching and other physical abuse

Bullies can use a range of methods and these include face-to-face, mobile phones, email, instant messaging or Internet message boards.

If you agree with the above definition of bullying please move to question 2. If however you don't agree with it please use this text box to add ANY changes you like.



*** 2. I think the current Olive Tree School definition is fine as it is**

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree so I have made changes above

4. Experience of student approaching staff member

Staff Member questionnaire

* 1. Have you ever been approached by a student who has:

- ☐ Been bullied
- ☐ Bullied others
- ☐ Witnessed bullying
- ☐ None of the above

5. Your experience of how The Olive Tree School deals with bullying incidents

1. What did you do in this case?

2. Did you feel satisfied with the procedure you followed?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If you answered 'no' what made you unsatisfied?

6. Your experience of how The Olive Tree School deals with bullying incidents 2

Staff Member questionnaire

1. Overall are you happy with the way The Olive Tree School deals with bullying?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If you ticked 'yes' what do you think works well?

7. Possible improvements?

1. What do you think could be improved?

8. Final question

1. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about bullying at The Olive Tree School?

9. Thank you

Thank you very much for completing our questionnaire, your views and opinions are very important for our research. If you would like to tell us more about your experience(s) please provide your contact details below.

Please note that your details will only be used to contact you and will not be used in any other way in the research

1. I would like to tell you more about my experience(s)

☐ Yes

☐ No

2. If you ticked 'yes' above please provide the following contact details:

Your name

Your email

Appendix 6: Student consent form (cycle one)



Anglia Ruskin
University

Cambridge & Chelmsford

Chelmsford Campus
Bishop Hall Lane
Chelmsford
CM1 1SQ

T: 0845 271 3333
Int: +44 (0)1245 493131
www.anglia.ac.uk

Young Person's Consent Form

NAME OF STUDENT: _____

Title of the project Defining bullying and developing initiatives:
A case study approach using a Participatory Action Research framework

Research Officer: Niamh O'Brien

Please tick all that apply.

1. I want to take part in the above research and I understand what my role will be. All my questions have been answered ☐
2. I understand that if I decide to be involved in the focus groups I will only be involved because I want to and that I can stop at any time for any reason. ☐
3. I understand that if I decide to be involved in the interviews I will only be involved because I want to and that I can stop at any time for any reason. ☐
4. I know that what I say will be kept confidential. ☐
5. I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study. ☐
6. I have been given a copy of this form and an Information Sheet. ☐

Name of student:

(Print).....Signed.....Date.....

Name of witness:

(Print).....Signed.....Date.....

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please complete the form below and return to Niamh O'Brien 2nd Floor WHB Anglia Ruskin University, Bishop Hall Lane, Chelmsford, CM1 1SQ Withdrawal can also be made verbally

Title of Project: Defining bullying and developing initiatives: A case study approach using a Participatory Action Research framework

I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY

Name: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____



Bullying in school and how we understand it!!

What I need to know

Information sheet
for students attending a group discussion or interview

Thank you for completing our online questionnaire. You have provided us with your contact details as you said you would like to tell us more. This information tells you about what happens next.....

What's this research about?

This research project is about bullying and how you feel about it at School. We have already asked you your views on the school definition of bullying and what you think about how it's dealt with at school. Now we'd like to ask you a bit more about these.....

Whose doing this research?

My name is Niamh O'Brien and I am a researcher at Anglia Ruskin University. I am studying for an award called a PhD (which I can tell you about if you're interested) and I am very concerned about bullying. I have worked with young people on previous projects like this one and I am very interested in hearing your views. I think it's really important to find out from young people themselves how they feel about bullying and what they see as the main problems with it at school. It's important, therefore that your story is heard and understood and that your views are taken seriously and acknowledged. I am working with a group of 6 students who have called themselves R4U (Research for you) and together we are doing this research.

Why should I speak to you?

By telling us your story about your experience of being bullied, bullying others, witnessing bullying or your interest in the area, you could help adults and students in school have a greater understanding of what bullying actually means to young people. We want to speak to as many students in your school as possible. We feel you hold valuable information which we can't get anywhere else.

What would I have to do?

You are invited to participate in a group talk called a focus group, where you can share your views on bullying. It will probably last about an hour but it might be shorter or longer, that will depend on you and the group and how much you want to tell us. It will be tape-recorded, with your permission, and we will be taking notes afterwards which you are welcome to look at. If at any point during the focus group you want to stop that's fine, you will not be pressurised to continue if you don't want to. We will also have a list of support agencies



you can contact if something comes up that you would like some help with.

What if I don't want to take part?

That's no problem. We only want to speak to you if you are willing. This is totally voluntary so if you think you don't want to do it that's fine. Also if you decide during the focus group that you no longer want to participate in the study you can pull out at any time without any questions. You can also take back something you've said if you feel it's not appropriate or doesn't reflect how you feel.

How will my details be used?

R4U and Niamh are the only people who will have access to your details. All information you give us will be kept in a locked filing cabinet that only we have access to. The tapes we use for recording will be numbered and your name will not be written *ANYWHERE* on any documents. At the end of the study Niamh has to write a report which will be examined by the university but you will never be identified here. We will also be writing a report for the school about bullying based on what you have told us. This report will help make changes about bullying in school. Anything you say will remain completely anonymous UNLESS you tell us something that means you or somebody else is at

risk. In this case we might have to tell somebody else for child protection reasons but we will explain more about that when we meet up for the focus group. Nothing will happen without telling you first.

I'm interested in getting involved so what do I do?

If you would like to be involved in the focus group please email (or phone) Niamh using the details below. You will also have to sign your own consent form and if you are under 16 your parent/carer will have to sign the parent one. You can bring these along on the day of the focus group.

Hope to hear from you soon.



Contact details:

Email: niamh.obrien@anglia.ac.uk
Phone: 0845 1964937

Supervisor details:

Professor Carol Munn-Giddings:
Email: Carol.Munn-Giddings@anglia.ac.uk
Phone: 0845 1964101

Appendix 8: Parent permission form (cycle one)



Anglia Ruskin
University

Cambridge & Chelmsford

Chelmsford Campus
Bishop Hall Lane
Chelmsford
CM1 1SQ

T: 0845 271 3333
Int: +44 (0)1245 493131
www.anglia.ac.uk

NAME OF YOUNG PERSON: _____

Title of the project: Defining bullying and developing initiatives: A case study approach using a Participatory Action Research framework

Researcher: Niamh O'Brien

I give permission for my son/daughter to take part in the above research



Name of parent/guardian

(Print).....Signed.....Date.....

If you have any questions relating to this project please contact me using the details below:

Niamh O'Brien
2nd Floor WHB
Anglia Ruskin University,
Bishop Hall Lane,
Chelmsford,
CM1 1SQ

Phone: 0845 1964197

Email: niamh.obrien@anglia.ac.uk

Appendix 9: Focus Group Topic Guide (cycle one)

Before the Focus Group starts

Introducing the focus group (Niamh)

Thank people for coming
Tell them why they are here
What will happen with the data
Findings will inform our report

Name game (Taha/Hanik)

To make everyone feel at ease we'll play a short name game

Ground rules (Patrick with Amy recording)

Ask group to set their own ground rules on how they would like the session to run.
Can use hints e.g. respect for other opinions, speak one at a time etc.
Ask young people their permission to record the focus group.
Amy to tape-record session.

Interview/focus group question schedule:

1. Placing the current bullying definition in the middle of the circle, we will discuss this with participants and ask them if they agree with it and if not what would they add/remove?
2. In your experience, if a student was likely to report a bullying experience/episode, who do you think they are most likely to report it to?

Prompts: Teachers, Blossom, Student nurse, counsellor, Family member

3. In the survey overall, we found that nearly half of students who were bullied, bullied someone else or witnessed bullying did not report the bullying experience/episode, in your opinion why do you think they would not report it?

Prompts: Fearful, 'snitch', 'not serious enough'

4. In your opinion/experience, is bullying more common in the lower or upper years? Why?
5. Are you satisfied with the way the school deals with bullying? Please tell us more
6. In your opinion, does bullying occur in any of the following incidences?

We will read out and prompt discussions

- Chuck and James are messing about in a school corridor and James playfully punches Chuck. At this point a teacher sees what is going on and tells James to report to the head teacher as this behaviour is not acceptable in school.
- Adam and José are both in year 9 and have been best friends since primary school. One day a new boy called Eric joins their class and wants to be friends with Adam and José but they have no interest in being friends with Eric so deliberately go out of their way to avoid him.
- Yasmeen has noticed that Kate has changed her hair colour from brunette to blonde and tells her it's lovely. She playfully calls her 'bimbo' but this is overheard

by a group of boys and girls in Kate's class and they all call her a bimbo in a playful way. Kate is upset by this but puts on a brave face.

- Sam and Jessica have been going out together since year 8 and they are now in year 10. Jessica decides that she no longer wants to go out with Sam anymore and breaks up with him. Sam is really upset and angry with Jessica and decides to tell everyone on Facebook her secrets.

7. Is there anything else you wish to explore in relation to bullying at school?

It will be made clear to young people in the FG that if they wish to follow up with more personal details that are difficult to share in a group they can do so by contacting Niamh directly.

Appendix 10: Cycle one research report



R4U members
 Hanik Kotecha, Year 11
 Taha Khan, Year 11
 Patrick Gray, Year 10
 Amy Parker, Year 9
 Hope O'Brien, Year 9

R4U - Research for you: *Researching for life without fear*, are a group of student researchers at The Olive Tree School and together with Niamh O'Brien from Anglia Ruskin University we form the research team for this project.

This short report tells the story about how we were formed, what we have done and what we plan to do in the future

How R4U were set up

We heard about the research at a school assembly during anti-bullying week in 2009. At this time 6 students were interested (3 boys and 3 girls). During our first meeting we found out more about the project and discussed why we think it is important to involve young people like us in research.

"Because we are closer to the students here they are more likely to tell us the truth than tell adults" (Patrick)

Since then we have been learning about research, how it is carried out, why it is done and certain considerations you have to make such as getting permission from people to participate.

"I came to the focus group and I liked it so I kept coming again. I think its fun and I like it" (Hope)

"I've learned the difference between qualitative and quantitative research I thought there was only one banner of research" (Hanik)

We had to decide on a name for the group. This took a long time but we all unanimously decided on R4U

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(Research for you) and our slogan is: *Researching for life without fear*. We also designed our logo.

"The head of boarding at Hawley house told me about some bullying research that was going on. I thought it would be something I would be interested in so I came along to a meeting. I've stayed involved because it's interesting and I'm always talking to people about their problems and this could help me help others" (Amy)



The research and what we did

Firstly we wanted to find out if students agree with the bullying definition in our school and secondly we wanted to know if the students are happy with how bullying is dealt with in our school.

We did this in two ways. Firstly we asked students to fill in a questionnaire, either online or in paper format. We received 93 responses. We then carried out a focus group, which is a group discussion and this was attended by a further 3 students.

In total we received views from 96 students from years 7-13. We were really happy with this response rate.

We told students about the questionnaire and the focus group through the following ways:

- Word of mouth
- Posters
- Presentations
- Assemblies
- Article in the school newsletter

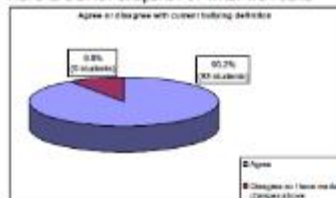
Bullying research at The Olive Tree School

Hanik Kotecha (Year 11)
 Taha Khan (Year 11)
 Patrick Gray (Year 10)
 Amy Parker (Year 9)
 Hope O'Brien (Year 9)
 Niamh O'Brien (Anglia Ruskin University)

We tried to include parents and teachers in our research and we advertised to them through the school newsletter and left posters and information sheets in the reception areas and the staff room. We only heard from two parent and two teachers.

What we found

Here is a brief snapshot of what we found



Most students agreed with the bullying definition. This is good news because it shows that the adults have considered all forms of bullying important to students.



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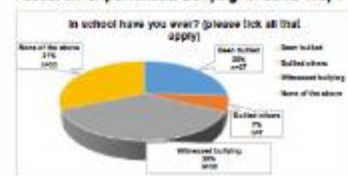
"Sometimes the school cannot make a very good judgement as to whether something is a joke or serious."

Those who disagreed felt that in some situations, teachers can't decide what is bullying and what is harmless fun.

Others felt that isolating a student from a friendship group is not always bullying.

"I do not think that isolating a student from a friendship group can always be classed as bullying ... if a person is given a fair chance but they don't really get on or they upset/anger people in the friendship group they shouldn't be still allowed to stay if the rest agree."

A staggering 77.4% (72 students) in our research experienced bullying in some way:



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From this number, 45.9% (33 students) did not report the bullying episode.

Feeling the bullying was not serious enough, out of fear of what would happen as a result of reporting it or the possibility of being labelled a 'snitch', were all reasons why the bullying was not reported.

"Because it wasn't really serious one and if someone reports it then this person becomes the new for bullying"

"It was not too serious but if it continues I am planning on talking to my Housemaster"

For those who did report the bullying (24 students), 75% (18) reported it to a teacher while 50% (12) told a family member and 16.7% (4) told another student.

From those who reported the bullying, 62.5% (15 students) were happy with the outcome. they felt it had been dealt with appropriately and in some cases students were happy they had

"It got dealt with quickly"

"It was sorted and I didn't have to worry about it again"

"made someone else's life, stress free from any future bullying"

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For those who were not happy with the outcome after it was reported (37.5%, 9 students), some felt the situation was made worse due to reporting it. Others felt the bully did not get punished enough while others felt teachers acted without contacting them and as a result they felt further excluded.

For those students who admitted that they were not happy with how the school dealt with bullying (23.7%, 22 students), they felt that each case should be dealt with individually and that in situations where teachers 'jump to conclusions' this is not very helpful.

"Bullying hurts people's feelings and therefore is always wrong. I've never seen someone to deal with it! Someone needs to take responsibility (in actions not only words because they don't really work in this school)"

"The support makes me happy. I have never witnessed it"

"Most of people just don't have the courage to report bullying, or immature by bullying the others (or each other)"

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Finally our research showed us that overall the majority of students (69.9% 65 students) were happy with the way The Olive Tree School deals with bullying.

How we made sense of the information

All this information we had was made anonymous as we did not want to identify anybody who had taken part in the research.

The information showed us that students were saying similar things about their bullying experiences (but everyone's story was unique to them) and this allowed us to put all of this information together in themes. These themes gave us the answers to our questions.

All members of R4U participated in this part of the project and it was great to see how it was all coming together. Based on this, we have been able to make recommendations to the school reflecting what you as students have told us. It has also allowed us to decide what we want to do now.

What we are going to do now.....

We want to research the idea of the 'snitch' and whether or not students feel safe to report bullying in school. Many of you told us

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that you didn't report a bullying situation because you did not think it was serious enough so we want to know more about this and what it means.

This time we are not using an online questionnaire because we received more responses from students when we used the paper questionnaire. These paper questionnaires for the next part of our research are now available to students in years 7-13 through their Head of Year or by contacting a member of the research team.

We are going to do focus groups but this time we are going to do them without any adults and just have students there to talk about bullying issues. We will also be providing pizza and soft drinks for all who participate. Like last time anyone who takes part in the focus group will receive a high street voucher as a thank you.

We are going to involve parents/carers and teachers a lot more this time by advertising their questionnaire more widely and maybe you can encourage your teachers and/or parents/carers to complete one.....

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Recommendations

From what you told us we are recommending the following:

A student representative from each year group to feed into Blossom so younger students feel able to approach this student support group with any problems they might have. Our research shows that nobody approached a member of Blossom to report a bullying incident.

Prefects and sixth formers in general to engage in activities with younger students in order to encourage them to come forward with any problems they might be facing (not only bullying issues).

For adults in the school to involve students more in decisions about policies regarding bullying and how it is dealt with. It is hoped that this would encourage students to have trust in how the bullying procedures are managed and dealt with.

To put safe procedures in place for those students who witness bullying to come forward and report it so they can make

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"...someone else's life, stress free from any future bullying"

Some thoughts from us

"I think this is a unique experience. I don't think I would have gotten the chance to be involved in anything like this if I went anywhere else, even to a comprehensive school. I'm really glad to be taking part!" (Monik)

"I've learnt that when I see things in the news like statistics and things that they had to have come from somewhere and that there are lots of things behind these statistics" (Patrick)

"I've learnt about the different forms of bullying. I know how to help other people now. Before I didn't know what was the right thing to say, now I know how to help them" (Amy)

"I've learnt lots of things" (Hope)

"I've learnt a lot about research. I've also learnt to respect researchers and the work they do. It's so difficult to get people to participate in things like questionnaires" (Taha)

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Contact details if you need help or advice about bullying:

Young NCB:

www.youngncb.org.uk/need_to_talk.aspx

Information for young people from NCB on getting help if you need to talk

Cybermentors: www.cybermentors.org.uk

CyberMentors is a safe social networking site providing information and support for young people affected by bullying.

ChildLine: www.childline.org.uk, phone 0800 1111

ChildLine is the UK's free, confidential helpline for children and young people. They offer advice and support, by phone and online, 24 hours a day

The Young Anti-Bullying Alliance is a group of children and young people from all around the country determined to put an end to bullying.

www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/young_anti-bullying_alliance.aspx

Connexions Direct: www.connexions-direct.com,

phone 080 800 13219

For young people aged 13-19, including information on dealing with bullying and staying safe online

Samaritans: www.samaritans.org, phone: 08457 90 90 90

Appendix 11: Ethical approval letter (cycle two)

Letter removed for confidentiality reasons

Appendix 12: Student information sheet (cycle two)



Anglia Ruskin
University



R4U
Researching for life without fear

Bullying research at The Olive Tree School

Do you have views and opinions you would like to
share on bullying at school? If so then please
read on.....

What's this research about?

This research project is about bullying in school. We want to find out how safe students feel to report it, what it means to be labelled a 'snitch' and when is bullying not serious enough to report.

Whose doing this research?

R4U members:

Hanik Kotecha (year 11),
Taha Khan (year 11)
Patrick Gray (year 10)
Amy Parker (year 9)
Hope O'Brien (year 9).

This research is being carried out by a group of students who call themselves R4U (Research for you). They are doing the research with a researcher from Anglia Ruskin University called Niamh O'Brien who is studying for an award called a PhD (which she can tell you about if you're interested). We think it's really important to find out from students themselves how they feel about bullying. It's important that your views are taken seriously and acknowledged.



What would I have to do?

We want to speak to as many students as possible. We feel you hold valuable information which we can't get anywhere else. You can participate in this research in one or two ways.

You can **complete our questionnaire** which will be given to you by your form tutor.

And/or

You can **attend a pizza lunch/evening meeting** with about 6-7 other students to talk about your views and thoughts on bullying or an interview with just one member of the team. We do not expect you to discuss, in any more detail than you want, your personal experiences or any problems you may have faced. The group will last about an hour (the interview about $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour), but you can leave at any time if you don't like it. We will record the group/interview (using a digital recorder) so we don't forget anything, however we will not be able to remove what you have said in the session once it has been recorded.



What's in it for me?

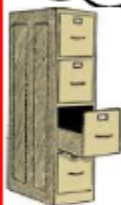


At the end of the group discussion we will give you a £15 high street voucher as a thank you for your time and input. You will be helping to possibly change the way The Olive Tree school deals with bullying and ensuring school is a safer place for all students.

That's no problem. We only want you to take part if you are absolutely sure. This is totally voluntary so if you think you don't want to do it that's fine.

What if I don't want to take part?

How will my details be used?



Everything you tell us will remain anonymous unless you say something that makes us believe you or another young person might be in danger. If this happens we may need to discuss what you have told us with someone else, and we would wherever possible talk to you about this. Only the researchers and the person who is typing it up will hear the recording of the group. At the end of the study we will write a report based on all the findings but you will not be identified in the report. Niamh will also have to write quite a big report for her PhD and you will not be identified here either.

If you are interested in taking part please contact any of the research team (Niamh's details are below) and we can discuss the research with you. You will be given a consent form to sign. This means that you understand what the research is about and that you are happy to take part.

I'm interested in getting involved so what do I do?

Contact details:

Email: niamh.obrien@anglia.ac.uk

Phone: 0845 1964197

Address: Anglia Ruskin University, 2nd Floor William Harvey Building, Bishop Hall Lane, Chelmsford, CM1 1SQ



Supervisor contact details:

Professor Carol Munn-Giddings

Email carol.munn-giddings@anglia.ac.uk

Phone: 0845 1964101

Address: Anglia Ruskin University, Faculty of Health and Social Care, 2nd Floor William Harvey Building, Bishop Hall Lane, Chelmsford, CM1 1SQ

Appendix 12a: Young Person's Consent Form (cycle two)



Anglia Ruskin
University

Cambridge & Chelmsford

Chelmsford Campus
Bishop Hall Lane
Chelmsford
CM1 1SQ

T: 0845 271 3333
Int: +44 (0)1245 493131
www.anglia.ac.uk

NAME OF YOUNG PERSON: _____

Title of the project Defining bullying and developing initiatives: A case study approach using a Participatory Research framework

Research Officer: Niamh O'Brien
Supervisor: Professor Carol Munn-Giddings

Please tick all that apply.

1. I want to take part in the above research and I understand what my role will be. All my questions have been answered ☐
2. I understand that if I decide to be involved in the focus groups or interview I will only be involved because I want to and that I can stop at any time for any reason ☐
3. I understand that the focus group will be tape-recorded ☐
4. I know that what I say will be kept confidential. ☐
5. I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study. ☐
6. I have been given a copy of this form and an Information Sheet. ☐

Name of student
(Print).....Signed.....Date.....

Name of witness
(Print).....Signed.....Date.....

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please complete the form below and return to Niamh O'Brien 2nd Floor WHB Anglia Ruskin University, Bishop Hall Lane, Chelmsford, CM1 1SQ Withdrawal can also be made verbally

Title of Project: Defining bullying and developing initiatives: A case study approach using a Participatory Action Research framework

I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY

Name: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 13: The student questionnaire (cycle two)

Last year and earlier this year we asked students to complete a questionnaire about bullying in school. **We received nearly 100 responses!!!** We also spoke to some students face to face in a group discussion known as a focus group.

We now have another questionnaire and this time we would like to **hear even more voices**. We are inviting you as a student of *The Olive Tree School* to complete this questionnaire. These questions are based on issues raised by students who completed the first questionnaire which they felt were important.



Some information about you:

Are you

Male ☐

Female ☐

How old are you?

11 ☐

15 ☐

19 ☐

12 ☐

16 ☐

20 ☐

13 ☐

17 ☐

14 ☐

18 ☐

What year are you in?

7 ☐

9 ☐

11 ☐

13 ☐

8 ☐

10 ☐

12 ☐

Day student ☐

How would you describe your ethnic origin?

Asian or Asian British ☐

Black or Black British ☐

Chinese ☐

Mixed ☐

White British ☐

White other ☐

Not known ☐

Prefer not to say ☐

Other ethnic group (please tell us)

Are you a:

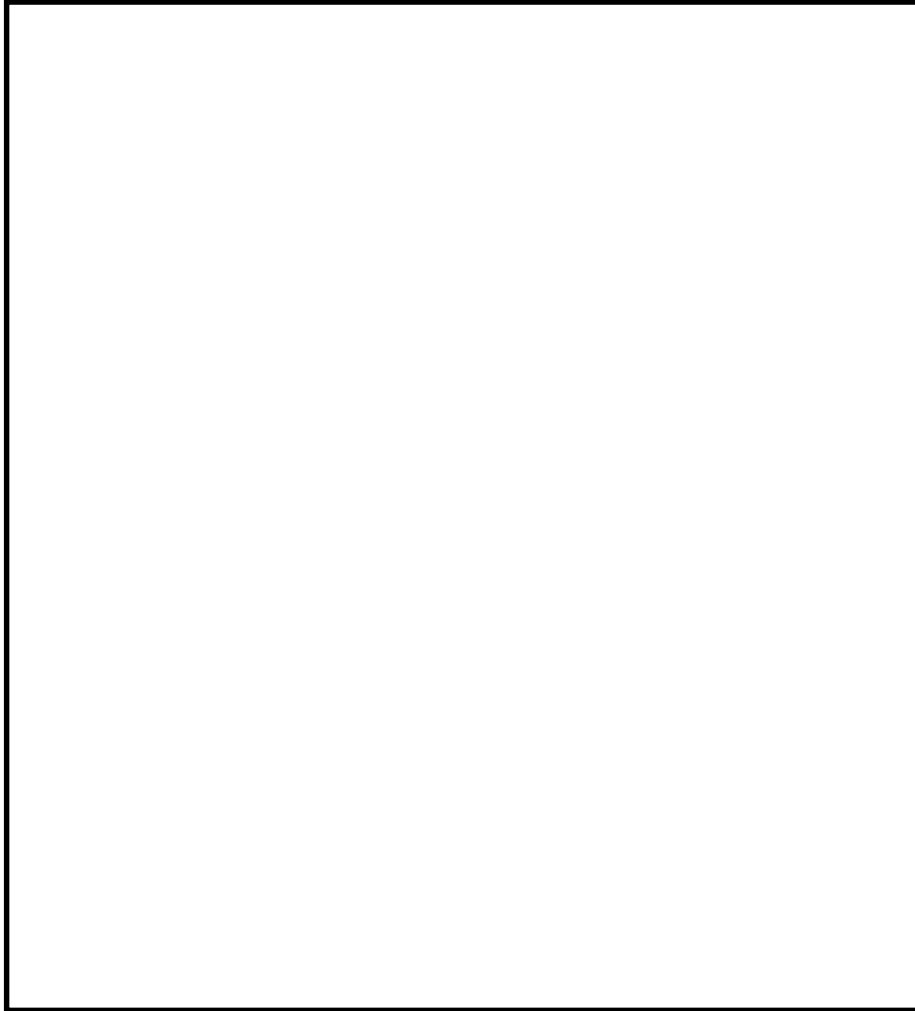
Full boarder ☐

Flexi boarder ☐

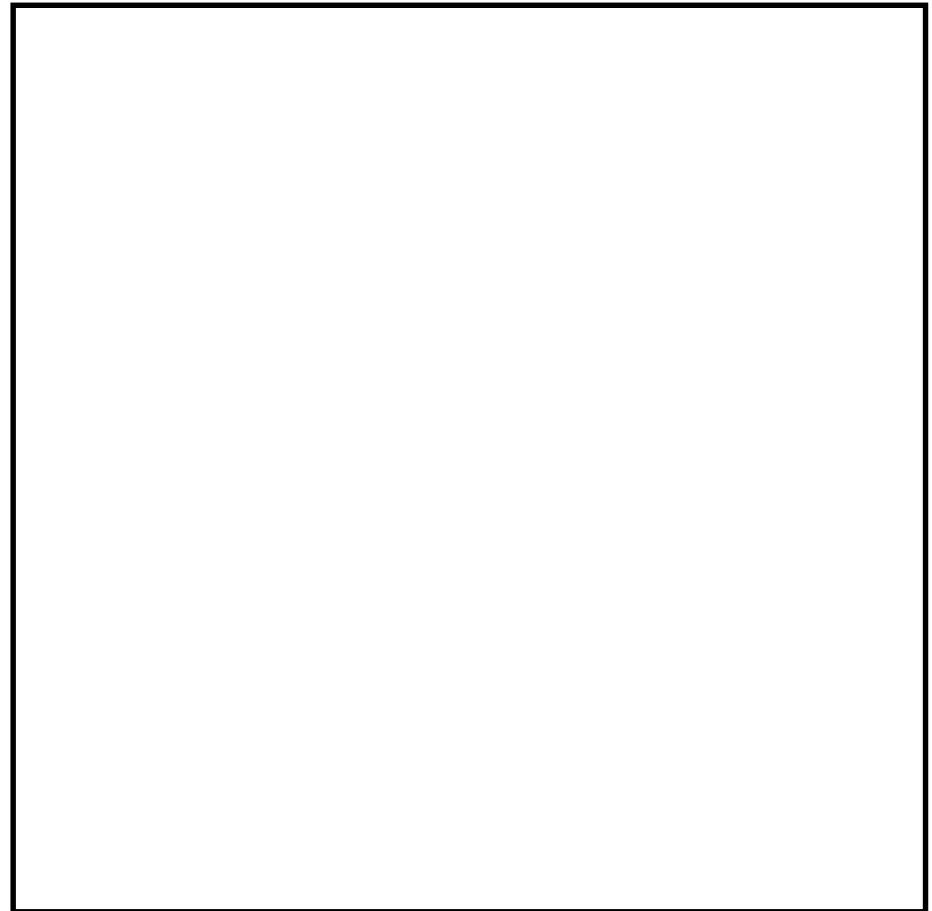
Weekly boarder ☐

1. In our previous questionnaire some students said they did not report a bullying incident because it wasn't serious enough. In your opinion when does bullying become serious enough?

2. You've told us what is serious, now can you tell us what is not serious?



3. In our questionnaire some students said they did not feel safe to report bullying in school. In your opinion how can the school ensure students feel safe enough to report bullying?



4. In our questionnaire some students were worried about being labelled as a 'snitch' if they reported bullying. Would you be worried about being labelled a 'snitch' if you had to report bullying?

Yes ☐

No ☐

5. Has this ever been a reason why you have not reported bullying?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Please tell us more

6. Are there any other reasons why you would not report bullying?

7. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about bullying at The Olive Tree School?

Would you be interested in speaking to us further about your experiences?

If so we would like to invite you to a pizza interview or pizza group discussion. If you are interested please leave your name and contact details below and we will contact you.

Name: _____

Contact email/phone number _____

I would prefer to participate in (please tick)

An interview ☐

A group discussion ☐

An interview is a one-to one discussion with you and a member of the research team where you can tell us about your experiences/views in confidence. You can bring somebody along to support you if you wish.

A group discussion is a discussion with about 6-7 other students where you can discuss your experiences/views. You can bring somebody along to support you if you wish.

We feel it's very important that members of the group will not discuss your story outside the group and vice-versa so we will ask everyone to agree to this.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire

If you require further information about this project please contact:

Niamh O'Brien

Niamh.obrien@anglia.ac.uk

Phone: 0845 1964197

Address: Anglia Ruskin University, Faculty of Health and Social Care, 2nd Floor William Harvey Building, Bishop Hall Lane, Chelmsford, CM1 1SQ, UK.

Supervisor details:

Professor Carol Munn-Giddings

Carol.munn-giddings@anglia.ac.uk

Phone: 0845 1964101

Address: Anglia Ruskin University, Faculty of Health and Social Care, 2nd Floor William Harvey Building, Bishop Hall Lane, Chelmsford, CM1 1SQ, UK.

Appendix 14: Email sent to parents (cycle two)

Dear parent/carer,

We are writing to you to invite you to complete a short questionnaire on bullying at *The Olive Tree School*. This is part of a wider research project which is being carried out by Niamh O'Brien (a PhD student at Anglia Ruskin University) and a group of students in the school who have called themselves R4U (Research for you). We are also inviting school staff and students to participate.

Last year and earlier this year we asked students to complete a questionnaire about bullying in school. **We received nearly 100 responses!!!** We also spoke to some students face to face in a group discussion known as a focus group.

We asked parents & carers to be involved but we did not receive many responses. We now have a new *very brief* questionnaire which we are asking parents/carers to complete. These questions are based on issues raised by students who completed the first questionnaire which they felt were important.

If you would like to participate please click the link and follow the instructions:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RM6M57V>

Your views and opinions will help shape the way bullying is dealt with at *The Olive Tree School* in the future.

Best wishes

Niamh O'Brien and R4U

Appendix 15: The parents survey (cycle two)

Parents/carers bullying questionnaire

1. Are you ?

- ☐ Male
☐ Female

2. How many children do you have attending The Olive Tree School?

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 4 |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 6+ |

3. How old is you child /are your children attending The Olive Tree School? (please tick all that apply)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11 | <input type="checkbox"/> 16 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 12 | <input type="checkbox"/> 17 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 13 | <input type="checkbox"/> 18 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 14 | <input type="checkbox"/> 19 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15 | <input type="checkbox"/> 20 |

4. What year is your child/ are your children in? (please tick all that apply)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7 | <input type="checkbox"/> 11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8 | <input type="checkbox"/> 12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9 | <input type="checkbox"/> 13 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10 | |

5. How would you describe your ethnic origin?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Asian or Asian British | <input type="radio"/> White British |
| <input type="radio"/> Black or Black British | <input type="radio"/> White other |
| <input type="radio"/> Chinese | <input type="radio"/> Not known |
| <input type="radio"/> Mixed | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |

Other ethnic group (please tell us)

6. Is your child / are your children:

- ☐ Full boarder
- ☐ Flexi boarder
- ☐ Weekly boarder
- ☐ Day student

Parents/carers bullying questionnaire

Some brief opinion questions about bullying

7. In our previous questionnaire some students said they did not report a bullying incident because it was not serious enough. Has your child ever been in this situation?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure

8. In your opinion, when is bullying not serious enough?

9. In our questionnaire some students said they did not feel safe to report bullying in school. In your opinion how can the school ensure students feel safe enough to report bullying?

10. In our questionnaire some students were worried about being labelled as a 'snitch' if they reported bullying. How do you think this could be dealt with in school?

11. Is there anything you would like to tell us about bullying at The Olive Tree School?

Parents/carers bullying questionnaire

Thank you

Thank you for completing this questionnaire

If you require further information about this project please contact:

Niamh O'Brien
Niamh.obrien@anglia.ac.uk

Phone: 0845 1964197
Address: Anglia Ruskin University, Faculty of Health and Social Care, 2nd Floor William Harvey Building, Bishop Hall Lane, Chelmsford, CM1 1SQ, UK.

Supervisor details:
Professor Carol Munn-Giddings
Carol.munn-giddings@anglia.ac.uk
Phone: 0845 1964101
Address: Anglia Ruskin University, Faculty of Health and Social Care, 2nd Floor William Harvey Building, Bishop Hall Lane, Chelmsford, CM1 1SQ, UK.

Appendix 16: The staff survey (cycle two)



Dear staff member,

We are writing to you to invite you to complete a short questionnaire on bullying at *The Olive Tree School*. This is part of a wider research project which is being carried out by Niamh O'Brien (a PhD student at Anglia Ruskin University) and a group of students in the school who have called themselves R4U (Research for you).

Last year and earlier this year we asked students to complete a questionnaire about bullying in school. **We received nearly 100 responses!!!** We also spoke to some students face to face in a group discussion known as a focus group.

We asked staff members to be involved but we did not receive many responses. We now have a new *very brief* questionnaire which we are asking staff members to complete. These questions are based on issues raised by students who completed the first questionnaire which they felt were important.

Your views and opinions will help shape the way bullying is dealt with at The Olive Tree School in the future.

Best wishes

Niamh O'Brien and R4U

Some information about you:

Are you

Male ☐

Female ☐

What is your position in school? (please tick all that apply)

Admissions ☐

After school care ☐

Bursary ☐

Catering ☐

Classroom support ☐

Class tutor ☐

Domestic ☐

Driver ☐

Head of Department ☐

Head of year ☐

Learning and teaching support ☐

Librarian ☐

Management ☐

Medical centre ☐

Midday support ☐

Secretarial support ☐

Teacher ☐

Other (please specify

How would you describe your ethnic origin?

Asian or Asian British ☐

Black or Black British ☐

Chinese ☐

Mixed ☐

White British ☐

White other ☐

Not known ☐

Prefer not to say ☐

Other ethnic group (please tell us)

Some brief opinion questions on bullying

In our previous questionnaire some students said they did not report a bullying incident because it wasn't serious enough. Have you ever come across this situation?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Unsure ☐

If so when, in your opinion, is bullying not serious enough?

In our questionnaire some students said they did not feel safe to report bullying in school. In your opinion how can the school ensure students feel safe to report bullying?

In our questionnaire some students were worried about being labelled as a 'snitch' if they reported bullying. How do you think this could be dealt with in school?

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about bullying at The Olive Tree School?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire

If you require further information about this project please contact:

Niamh O'Brien
Niamh.obrien@anglia.ac.uk

Phone: 0845 1964197

Address: Anglia Ruskin University, Faculty of Health Social Care and Education, 2nd Floor William Harvey Building, Bishop Hall Lane, Chelmsford, CM1 1SQ, UK.

Supervisor details:

Professor Carol Munn-Giddings
Carol.munn-giddings@anglia.ac.uk

Phone: 0845 1964101

Address: Anglia Ruskin University, Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education, 2nd Floor William Harvey Building, Bishop Hall Lane, Chelmsford, CM1 1SQ, UK.

Appendix 17: The student's semi-structured interview guide (cycle two)

Notes to interviewer:

- Introduce yourself and tell the student you are from R4U and that this interview is taking place because they completed the questionnaire and volunteered to be interviewed.
- Ask them if they understand why they are here and what the research is about.
- Remind them that the interview is being tape-recorded and make sure they are happy with this. If they are not happy then you will have to take notes.
- Explain that nobody else will hear the recorded interview except Niamh and the person who types it up. It will then be deleted from the recorder. Their name will not appear anywhere in our research report.
- Explain that all the data will be kept confidential unless a student tells you that they or another student are being harmed in any way. In that case you will have to stop the interview and seek support from Niamh.
- Explain that they do not have to answer any questions they are not happy with.
- Ask them to sign the consent form
- Turn on the recording equipment.

Topic guide

These questions are very much prompts for discussion. The intention will be to enable the young person to tell their story from their perspective. These questions will help shape the interview should the young person need guidance.

The R4U member doing the interview will have the original questionnaire from the student so will know what they said previously.

1. In the questionnaire you told us that serious bullying involves XXXX. Can you tell me why you feel that way?

2. In the questionnaire students mostly said that not serious bullying includes 'banter', 'jokes' and 'name-calling'. Do you agree with this?

Prompt: Have you ever been involved in a situation like this? Can you tell me more about it?

3. If you wanted to talk to someone about bullying who would you talk to?

Prompt: Teacher, *Blossom*, friend, family member

4. In the questionnaire students said that reporting bullying should be done in a confidential way. How do you think the school could do this?

Prompt: Anonymous box, members of *Blossom* to go to the students rather than *Blossom* coming to them, approachable teacher/older student.

5. Anything else you would like to add?

When the interview has finished

- Thank the student for their time and remind them about confidentiality and anonymity.
- Give them their £15 high street voucher
- Give them the list of support agencies should they wish to make contact.
- Turn off the recorder

Appendix 18: Draft anti-bullying strategy

Why this research was carried out and what it is about:

- We carried out this research because we wanted to know if students, staff and parents agreed with the bullying definition used in the school. We also wanted to find out how happy everyone was with how the school handle bullying incidents.
- From this we found that many students who witnessed bullying, told us that they would not report bullying because they were **afraid the bully would turn on them** or they would be known as a 'snitch'. Many students told us that they did not report a bullying situation because they did not think it was **serious enough** so we wanted to know more about this and what it means.

What is bullying?

The Olive Tree School define bullying as:

Bullying is when a student is repeatedly, and over a period of time, targeted by one or more students. Bullies intend to frighten, hurt, or threaten their victims. Bullying can take many forms, such as:

- Teasing or name calling
- Malicious gossip
- Racial or sexual harassment
- Isolating a student from a friendship group
- Damaging or stealing property
- Hitting, punching and other physical abuse

Bullies can use a range of methods and these include face-to-face, mobile phones, email, instant messaging or Internet message boards.

- We found that the **majority of students were happy with the definition** (90.2%, 83 students) whilst only 9.8%, 9 students were not.

What students have told us about bullying:

- We ran two questionnaires. The first (cycle 1) was online and asked about the definition and how happy people were with how bullying is handled. The second (cycle 2) was a paper questionnaire and asked students about 'the snitch', feeling safe to report bullying and what they consider serious bullying to be. In total we heard from 155 students in our 2 surveys 93 in cycle 1 and 62 in cycle 2).
- From these 155, we spoke to 3 students in a group discussion after the first questionnaire and we interviewed 8 students after the second questionnaire.
- In the first cycle of the project **77.4% (72 students) had experienced bullying in some way** through being bullied, witnessing bullying or bullying others.
- Most did not report the bullying but from those who did (24 students) **62.5% (15 students) were happy with the outcome**, they felt it had been dealt with appropriately and in some cases students were happy they had "**made someone else's life stress free from any future bullying**".
- For those who were not happy with the outcome after it was reported (**37.5%, 9 students**), some felt the **situation was made**

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worse due to reporting it. Others felt the bully did not get punished enough while others felt teachers acted without contacting them and as a result they felt further excluded.

- **In the second cycle of the project** students told us that **bullying is not serious when it is seen as a joke between all involved**. This was particularly true of name calling which some students felt depended on the context: *"I think again it depends on what sort of jokes and names you get called"* (Zara, year 8 boarder). Students also referred to this when they considered their friends calling them particular 'nicknames' but when this involved others for no apparent reason it became serious bullying.
- **Repetition** was considered an important element of 'serious bullying' in school: *"Something that's quite repetitive, so it's not just like a one off offence between... I don't know, friends, like just a sly comment or something, something that continues for a long period of time"* (Sarah, year 8 day student).
- **Racist name calling, 'mental bullying' in terms of the language used and physical assault were all considered as elements of serious bullying by students**. Henry in year 8 told us *"...but I think it's really serious when it starts getting into your personal life 'cos, you know, you can come home really sad, you know, you can get depressed. I've*

even read in some cases kids have killed themselves because of it, and that really affects personal life".

- Students were very split in terms of who they would report a bullying episode to. Some mentioned **particular teachers as being excellent supports** while others were not. Some regarded their friends as the people they would confide in. Some students said they would tell their parents and in interviews we discovered that some students would be worried about their parents 'over-reacting' to the situation. Informal conversation with others showed the fees and expense associated with attending a private school would impact on their decision to tell their parents as they did not want them to worry. Some students in the questionnaire told us they **would report the episode to Blossom but most who were interviewed said they would not as they did not know where Blossom were based and some felt "intimidated" by the older students**.
- In the interviews students told us **why they think bullying happens at The Olive Tree School**. Reasons given included **'money'** – where students were singled out for not having the best items of clothing or buying small gifts for birthdays, particularly if they were on a scholarship. Some saw the bully as **'having nothing better to do'** and some considered bullying being about **popularity** and fitting in. Finally, students considered **'difference'** with regard to accent for example, while others thought bullying happens to students who are considered **'weaker'** than others.
- **Students told us that the best way to deal with bullying is 'on your own'** while one boarding student told us about a club she

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attends outside school which gives her respite from being at school all the time and with the same people.

What parents have told us about bullying:

- From our two questionnaires (cycle 1 & cycle 2) sent to parents we heard from **135 parents in total**. In the first questionnaire we had 2 responses while in the second questionnaire we had 133.
- We did not have enough information in the first questionnaire to reach any conclusions but in the second we found the following:
- Most parents felt that **all bullying was 'serious'** and all complaints should be handled appropriately. However, like the students, some parents/carers felt that *'playground banter...should not be considered bullying'*. Other parents considered the **resilience of the student on the receiving end of the attack**. These parents believed that it is this resilience that determines how the bullying is perceived and what may be harmless behaviour to one student could in fact be seen as very serious to another.
- **Parents told us that students could feel safer to report bullying incidents in school if they had a confidant to confide in** and if the complaint was dealt with in confidence. Some suggestions included email or a post-box to report bullying, while others

suggested peer support and *"the right teacher is...very important"*. Others spoke about encouraging students to speak up against incidents of bullying and promoting a culture that bullying in all forms will not be tolerated. This included classroom discussions and **visual displays of the anti-bullying policy**.

- In terms of students being worried about being labelled as a snitch, parents had various suggestions for how this could be dealt with. **A zero tolerance approach** to bullying and promoting a culture whereby **reporting bullying is encouraged** was suggested by many. Others again considered the notion of reporting bullying in confidence where the bully would not know who reported the incident. Parents also spoke about **educating students about the seriousness of bullying** and associated harmful effects, as well as talking about **raising the self-esteem** of those who have been bullied to feel confident to report it and/or deal with it.

What teachers have told us about bullying:

- From our two questionnaires (cycle 1 & cycle 2) sent to teachers and staff at *The Olive Tree School* we heard from **12 staff members in total**. In the first questionnaire we had 2 responses while in the second questionnaire we had 10.
- We did not have enough information in the first questionnaire to reach any conclusions but in the second we found the following:
- Like parents many staff told us that they **consider all bullying to be serious**. Some, however told us that in some cases it is **how**

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the incident is perceived by the victim. *"This is a matter of personal perspective for both staff and pupils. Some students would consider even the most light-hearted teasing as bullying whereas others can be on the receiving end of a torrent of abuse and not be phased by it. The seriousness of a bullying incident depends entirely on the viewpoint of the victim and bully".*

- In order for students to feel safe to report bullying in school, staff stated that **reporting bullying should be encouraged** *"Only you can change this by reporting it".* Some staff members also

recommended the use of the current systems which are in place such as the pastoral system and *Blossom* which are *"designed to make this as easy as possible for students to report bullying incidents"*. Furthermore staff also felt that **anonymity should be assured** in order to encourage students to come forward.

- For the most part staff recommended **educating students about the effects of bullying** and promoting a culture of 'telling' in order for students not to be fearful about reporting bullying incidence. Building this into regular discussion groups is one way to explore the issues.

<p><i>(The research revealed that for the most part students would speak to a teacher in school or their own parents but many spoke about confiding in a peer.)</i></p>	<p><i>person, and if you saw them round the school and you said oh, could I speak to you for a minute"</i> (Amanda year 9, day student)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Blossom</u> rep from each tutor group in the <u>younger years (7-9)</u>: Each tutor group to have a peer rep to feed into the wider <i>Blossom</i> group. This is to enable students, particularly in the younger years to speak up about incidents of bullying or general unhappiness in school to a peer. Election of these students should be made through tutors who know their class group, as the research showed that popular students are more likely to be nominated into such roles and in some incidences they are the bullies. 	<p>Tutors Potential peer support from students who have been through bullying themselves.</p>	<p>September 2012</p>	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Training for <i>Blossom</i> and tutor group reps in bullying issues:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising the signs of bullying • Providing relevant support to students • Build confidence in <i>Blossom</i> members and reps as they will feel more equipped to provide support to students. <p><i>“Even if it only helps just one person it’s worth it”</i> (R4U member)</p>	<p>Chaplaincy head</p> <p>Head of pastoral care</p> <p>Head boy and girl</p> <p>This training could take place during any of the following times:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lunch-times • PSHE lessons • Horizon time <p>NOTE: Idea behind this training is for <i>Blossom</i> members and reps to feel more confident if a student presents with a bullying issue. They would thus be aware of the systems followed in the school and be able to advise the student appropriately. One possible way they could support is to go with a student to report an incident to a teacher.</p>	March 2012	
Teacher Training on bullying <i>(originating from students reporting some teachers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on empathy particularly for boarders • Recognising the signs and symptoms of bullying 	<p>Principal</p> <p>Head of Chaplaincy</p> <p>Head of Pastoral Care</p>	January 2012	

<i>are not supportive when dealing with bullying issues)</i>	– those being bullied and those bullying	This training could take place during inset days with follow up training and refreshers as needed.		
Reporting bullying (From student, parent and staff data)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage students to use email to report bullying incidents • Encourage students to report bullying to cyber-mentors who are trained to provide support • Responding rapidly and in confidence to student complaints about bullying 	<p><i>The Olive Tree School</i> email will be up and running for all students after Christmas 2011.</p> <p>Lead on cyber-mentoring project</p>	March 2012	
Raise confidence and self-esteem of all pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporating bullying discussions into PHSE lessons • Recommend after-school activities for those students who have reported being bullied to encourage them to participate fully and therefore improve their resilience to bullying behaviours. 		September 2012	

Appendix 19: Article from R4U

Investigating bullying at school: A student led project

Taha Khan (*The Olive Tree School*, year 13)

Hanik Kotecha (*The Olive Tree School*, year 13)

Patrick Gray (*The Olive Tree School*, year 12)

Amy Parker (*The Olive Tree School*, year 11)

Hope O'Brien (*The Olive Tree School*, year 11)

With support from Niamh O'Brien (Research Fellow, Anglia Ruskin University, Chelmsford)⁹¹

Introduction

In our research group we believe that bullying is a subjective issue, as one of our teachers put it:

"This is a matter of personal perspective for both staff and pupils. Some students would consider even the most light-hearted teasing as bullying whereas others can be on the receiving end of a torrent of abuse and not be phased by it"

Three years ago a group of students, under the guidance of Niamh O'Brien (a Research Fellow at Anglia Ruskin University), set out to find out more about this complex issue at *The Olive Tree School*. Falling under the bracket of an 'independent boarding school' our preliminary literature research showed the lack of investigation into bullying at these types of institutions. We were all very interested to find out more about this topic.

This article tells the story of how a research project investigating bullying at our school took place. We begin by discussing how we became researchers in this project and the training we had. We then talk about our bullying project which had two cycles. The first cycle concentrated on our school bullying definition and in the second cycle we decided as a group that we wanted to look further into the concept of the 'snitch' and how it felt for students to report bullying at our school. Finally we discuss our findings and describe what is happening at school as a result of the work we have carried out.

⁹¹ For more information contact Niamh O'Brien, Research Fellow, Anglia Ruskin University, 2nd Floor William Harvey Building, Chelmsford, CM1 1SQ niamh.obrien@anglia.ac.uk 0845 1964197

Students as researchers

Initially six students volunteered to take part in this research project proposed by Niamh, who gave a presentation about the work during anti-bullying week in November 2009. In this respect we became researchers with her and worked together to investigate bullying at our school. We started meeting in January 2010 and continued to do so until March 2013. We all had different reasons to join this group:

"I wanted to learn more about research and have something unique to put on my CV" (Taha)

"This was a unique opportunity I would not get anywhere else" (Hanik)

"I wanted to try and stop bullying" (Patrick)

We initially underwent a period of training during which Niamh was able to teach us the basics of research including methods, implementation, analysis of data and ethics. Confidentiality was a major issue that we as researchers were made very aware of. During our training Niamh explained to us that this study was using an approach called Participatory Action Research (PAR) and it meant that we had the opportunity to become as involved as we wished in the project. Our participation was very important to how the project developed and we were free to leave the project as we wished. Through using the PAR approach it meant that after the first cycle was complete we were in the unique position of being able to drive the research in the direction we wanted. During the course of the research we all received a 'Certificate of Recognition' from Essex County Council as a result of the bullying research work we have done.

Data collection cycle one

In the first cycle of research we developed online questionnaires for students, parents and staff asking them about the school bullying definition and how satisfied they were with how incidents of bullying are dealt with in the school. We thought all people in the school would share our enthusiasm to investigate this issue but we were mistaken. For the first time in our lives we were on the receiving end of the cold shoulder given to researchers who base their work on the altruism of willing volunteers. Only two members of staff and two parents replied showing us the enthusiasm of the staff and parents! We were however able to find out about the views of 93 students from a school of 805.

Our first port of call with our questionnaire was exploring the definition of bullying. Being such a subjective term it was important to know if students, staff and parents agreed with the official published definition of the school. As it happens, 90% of students were. We found that a staggering 77% of students experienced bullying in some

way or another either being the victim, witness or even the aggressor.

However, from these students only 42% reported the bullying. Students who did not report bullying (58%) told us their reasons were because they did not think it was serious enough or they were afraid to do so, as the following quote shows:

“Because it wasn't really serious one and if someone reports it then this person becomes the new for bullying”

Overall 70% of students were happy with the way the school deals with bullying.

We explored the idea around reporting bullying further in a focus group which we ran with three students and the idea of bullying not being serious enough to be reported was a feature of this focus group. This, for us, further emphasised the subjective nature of bullying. Another deterrent for not reporting bullying was being labelled as a ‘snitch’ by one’s peers. This then formed the basis of the next cycle of our research where we investigated the notion of the ‘snitch’ and what teachers, parents and students understood serious bullying to mean.

Data collection cycle two

After we had experienced problems with people participating in our online questionnaire we decided that in this cycle we would use a paper questionnaire instead. These paper questionnaires were given to heads of year to distribute and from the 120 we gave out we received 61 responses. We were particularly concerned with the lack of responses from teachers and parents in cycle one so this time we went to the staff room with questionnaires for staff to complete and we asked the school to email all of the parents. The response rate rose from 2 teachers in cycle one to 10 teachers in cycle two and two parents in cycle one to a staggering 133 parents in cycle two!! We also carried out eight individual interviews with students so we were very happy with our data collection in cycle two. Some of the findings from this cycle included:

Student findings:

- Students said bullying is not serious when it is seen as a joke between all involved and repetition was considered an important element of ‘serious bullying’ in school.
- Physical assault was always considered as ‘serious bullying’ while name calling and mental bullying could be either.

- Students were split in terms of who they would report a bullying episode to. Some mentioned particular teachers as being excellent supports while others were not. Some regarded their friends as the people they would confide in. Many students said they would not tell their parents and in interviews we discovered that some students would be worried about their parents 'over-reacting' to the situation. Informal conversation with others showed the fees and expense associated with attending a private school would impact on their decision to tell their parents as they did not want them to worry. Some students in the questionnaire told us they would report the episode to *Blossom* (student support group in the school. *Blossom* are discussed in the recommendations section) but most who were interviewed said they would not as they did not know where *Blossom* are based and some felt "intimidated" by the older students.
- In the interviews students told us why they think bullying happens at *The Olive Tree School*. Reasons included 'money' – where students were singled out for not having the best items of clothing or buying small gifts for birthdays, particularly if they were on a scholarship. Some saw the bully as 'having nothing better to do' and some considered bullying being about popularity and fitting in. Finally, students considered 'difference' with regard to accent for example, while others thought bullying happens to students who are considered 'weaker' than others.

Staff findings

- Many staff members told us that they consider all bullying to be serious but in some cases it is how it is perceived by the victim as our opening quote indicates.
- In order for students to feel safe to report bullying in school, staff stated that reporting bullying should be encouraged and anonymity assured.
- For the most part staff recommended educating students about the effects of bullying.

Parent findings

- Most parents felt that all bullying is 'serious' and all complaints should be handled appropriately while others considered the resilience of the student on the receiving end of the attack.

- Parents told us that students could feel safer to report bullying incidents in school if they had somebody to confide in.
- Others spoke about encouraging students to speak up against incidents of bullying.
- In terms of students being worried about being labelled as a snitch, parents had various suggestions for how this could be dealt with:
 - A zero tolerance approach whereby reporting bullying is encouraged.
 - Educating students about the seriousness of bullying.
 - Raising self-esteem.

Our recommendations

After we had analysed all of the data from the questionnaires, focus group and interviews it was clear to us what our school community saw as the bullying issues in school. In order to help the school improve how bullying is dealt with we suggested ways that would help students feel safer to talk and report bullying to students of the school as well as staff. Several reasons were identified in our research as to why students would not report bullying. One of these reasons was that some younger students were intimidated by older students so would not approach them about their concerns. Another reason was that students felt that some staff were not empathetic enough to discuss such issues with. The following details the ideas we proposed for changes in our school and how they were received:

Year seven induction

We proposed that in order to welcome newer students to the school that members of the senior prefect team should be involved in their induction. This was accepted by the school and now all prefects are involved in the induction of year sevens. This enables these younger students to recognise older students around the school and hopefully feel more comfortable to approach them about any issue in school.

The success of this approach has varied as most prefects have not had any issues reported to them but some students are beginning to bring up issues with their prefects.

Blossom rep for each year group

Blossom is our school student support group and historically they have been a support to younger students; whereby these students could go to *Blossom* with any

issues they had and seek support. Representation on *Blossom* is made up of sixth formers and school staff. One of the recommendations from our study was that all year groups from year seven to year thirteen should have a representative on *Blossom*. This was rejected by the school due to the levels of maturity they felt the younger students lacked in relation to potentially dealing with issues around child protection and other sensitive issues. The school compromised however and we now have two *Blossom* representatives each going into year seven, year eight and year nine tutor groups. We feel that this creates a greater sense of school community as well as providing the junior students with another person to talk to about any bullying issues and also provides an opportunity for older students to improve their leadership skills.

Currently each year seven and year eight tutor groups have two *Blossom* prefects and most year nine tutor groups have the same. However we need more *Blossom* representatives to volunteer to go into these year groups. The reason two prefects have been assigned to each tutor group is to help with crowd control and to help expose the younger students to more sixth formers.

Training for Blossom and tutor group reps in bullying issues

All *Blossom* members (also known as *Blossom* Tutors) are briefed on child protection issues and told about the relevant procedures they need to follow should this arise. However there is no specific training focused purely on bullying and what actions students need to take. *Blossom* members are advised to bring issues up with the Chaplaincy team in this case. We have now recommended that all members of *Blossom* receive specific training in identifying and helping to resolve bullying issues.

Encourage students to use email to report bullying incidents

Students, parents and teachers recommended that the option to report bullying anonymously and confidentially should be provided in school. This has been done whereby the home page on all school computers display the *Blossom* email address and venue of *Blossom* meetings so students can attend to talk about whatever issues are troubling them.

A faster confidential response to bullying issues

All matters of bullying are taken seriously in the school and have been thoroughly investigated. While in the past there were complaints about the time it took for issues to be dealt with, in this current academic year there have been no complaints that we are aware of.

Conclusion

In conclusion we have found that the problems of bullying in our school are centred on students not feeling safe to report bullying and differences in what constitutes serious bullying in school. We have made recommendations to our school's senior management team and we are pleased to report that we have been listened to as is evident from how our recommendations are being implemented in the school.

For us, as students, we are very grateful to Niamh for giving us the opportunity to carry out a research project led by us under her guidance and experience. We greatly appreciate the role of the school in accepting our findings openly and implementing any changes. Despite bullying being dealt with well at *The Olive Tree School*, we are still indebted to the Vice Principal and other members of the Senior Management Team for being so open about such a sensitive issue. We hope that researchers in the future will take Niamh's example and provide students with their own opportunity to carry out their own research.

Appendix 20: List of staff roles

Position	No of staff ⁹²	
	Male	Female
Admissions		
After school care		
Bursary		
Catering		
Classroom support		
Class tutor		
Domestic		1
Driver		
Head of department	3	3
Head of year		2
Learning and teaching support		
Librarian		
Management		
Medical centre		
Midday support		
Secretarial support		
Teacher	3	1
Other		

⁹² Some staff had multiple roles